BOOK II

Second Centum—First Decad (II-1)
(Vāyum tirai)

Preamble

In the last stanza of the preceding decad, the Āḻvār who had already conjured up the vision of the Lord as having entered his body and gone right up to his head, referred to the Lord as the blue gem, overlord of the Celestials and a very attractive jewel, by himself. Each one of these features of the Lord was so fascinating that the Āḻvār could not resist the immediate urge to enjoy them outwardly. The enjoyment, longed for, did not, however, materialise instantly and the Āḻvār was thrown into a state of deep dejection, reduced to the abject position of a forlorn lover. The Āḻvār, thus transformed into a female lover (Parāṇkuśa Nāyakī), pining for her beloved Lord, moves into a garden on the sea-shore to bemoan her separation. It may be recalled that she was in a similar predicament earlier, when she sent the birds etc, as her emissaries to the Lord—See I-4. But then, she is worse off now, not finding any one to carry her message to the Lord. The self-same stork which she had commissioned earlier now looms in her eyes as a comrade-in-distress. The stork's natural complexion is white but the Āḻvār thinks that it is a case of decoloration due to the pangs of separation from the Lord, experienced by it. The Aṉṟil birds of opposite sex always stay together and even during sleep keep their bills locked in each other's mouth. The moment the bills get unlocked, they wake up and start crying. Unaware of this natural sequence, Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī thinks that these birds cry out their agony of separation from the Lord, like her. The wind, ever on the move, appears to the Āḻvār to go about frantically in search of the Lord; the clouds, unleashing rain-water, look like shedding tears of grief due to separation from the Lord; likewise, the waning of the Moon, the surging, up and down, of the waves, the burning of the lamp and all other natural phenomena are invested by the love-lorn Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī with her own poignancy and she bemoans their lot as well. This sets the pace and pattern of this decad, pin pointing the Lord's quality of making his devotees mad with God-love.

T—4

Here is an interesting comparison: Lakṣmaṇa, while pleading that he should be allowed to accompany Śrī Rāma into exile, cited the example of the fish failing to survive without water, thereby indicating that Śrī Rāma was unto Lakṣmaṇa what water is unto fish. But here is Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī who feels that the fish, water and all things subsist on the Lord and cannot brook separation from Him! The Āḻvār addresses these Comrades-in-distress commiserating with them in their sad plight. It is worth noting that Śloka 15 and the following few ślokas in the last chapter of the tenth skanda of Bhāgavatam run in a similar vein.

vāyum tirai ukaḷum kāṉal maṭa nārāy!
āyum, amar-ulakum tuñcilum nī tuñcāyāl;
nōyum payalaimaiyum mītu-ūra emmēpōl,
nīyum tirumālāl neñcam kōḷ-paṭṭāyē? (II–1–1)

Translation

Sleep you don't, You young stork in the sea-shore garden!
Though my mother and Heavens too have into slumber gone;
The whole of your body is white with grief great;
Like me, have you unto Tirumāl lost your heart?

Notes

(i) Not falling within the mischief of 'tamas' (inertia), there is no question of the Heavens going into slumber. The wonder of it is that even the Heavens, never known to sleep, have gone to sleep, but the poor stork doesn't sleep! The (gnostic) mother would not sleep because there was a time when she was agitating her mind about finding a suitable match for her highly evolved daughter (Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī), and now again, the mother cannot sleep when the daughter is in such a state of mental agony, separated from her Lord. Even such a mother has gone to sleep but the stork wouldn't sleep. Surely, its affliction must be very heavy.

(ii) The Āḻvār thinks that decoloration has set in throughout the body of the stork like the fast-spreading poison, and that is why it is white all over. About the

decoloration of the lover due to the gloom of separation, see notes below I-4-4.

(iii) The scul can neither be split nor burnt, neither wetted nor dried up, and yet the Āḻvār has, in several places, referred to his getting split, burnt, wetted and dried up; the inanimate mind is raised by him to the status of an animate being and he extols it and denounces it alternately, according to its tempo and behaviour; each sense-organ, each faculty, is made to acquire an independent stature of its own, as if it is a separate animate entity by itself and these compete with each other in the matter of God-enjoyment, exceeding and even transcending their functional limitations (III-8); God-love, engendered in the Āḻvār also acquires a similar stature and is said to thaw down like ice. And now, the Āḻvār sees the very elements, water, wind and fire, as comrades-in-distress, and weeps along with them, bespeaking the intensity of his God-thirst, not conforming to the conventional norms of thinking and behaviour. (aphorism 132 of Ācārya Hṛdayaṁ).

kōḷ-paṭṭa cintaiyaiyāyk kūrvāya aṉṟilē!
cēṇ-paṭṭa yāmaṅkaḷ cērātu iraṅkutiyāl;
āḷ-paṭṭa emmēpōl nīyum aravu-aṇaiyāṉ
tāḷ-paṭṭa taṇ-tulāyt tāmam kāmuṟṟāyē? (II–1–2)

Translation

Ye Aṉṟil with beak sharp, down-hearted that you are,
Your voice is feeble and without sleep you suffer
During long spells of night; did you also covet
As I do, the cool tulaci garland at the feet
Of the Lord, reclining on His serpent couch?

Note

Just as he was addressing the stork, the Āḻvār heard the Aṉṟil birds in the neighbouring palmyra tree, crying out their agony of separation, as and when their bills got unlocked during sleep, vide also the preamble to this decad. The

Āḻvār extends his sympathy to these birds, looking upon them as comrades-in-distress.

kāmuṟṟa kaiyaṟavōṭu ellē irāppakal
nī muṟṟak kaṇ tuyilāy; neñcu uruki ēṅkutiyāl;
tī muṟṟat teṉ ilaṅkai uṭṭiṉāṉ tāḷ nayanta
yām uṟṟatu uṟṟāyō? vāḻi! kaṉai kaṭalē. (II–1–3)

Translation

You languish without sleep, You roaring Sea!
Both day and night, and your heart is watery, I see;
Are you with grief afflicted as we are,
Not attaining the feet of our Lord Who by fire
Destroyed Laṅkā? May you from grief be free and prosper!

Notes

(i) The Sea can be said to sleep when it is silent without throwing the waves up. But the waves are surging up and down all the time, be it day or night; this sleeplessness is attributed by the Āḻvār to its separation from the Lord.

(ii) The sea roars and it is mere sound with no meaning, just like the indistinct sound coming from a throat, choked with grief. The Āḻvār is inclined to think that the poor thing is down with grief, too deep for words.

(iii) The Āḻvār would appear to tell the sea: "Sītā was also a woman like me, and Śrī Rāma languished without food and sleep, bunded the Sea, a herculean task indeed, and got at her. He is, however, unmindful of me. Do you also feel tortured by His indifference, as I do?"

kaṭalum malaiyum vicumpum tuḻāy empōl
cuṭar koḷ irāppakal tuñcāyāl, taṇ vāṭāy!
aṭal koḷ paṭai-āḻi ammāṉaik kāṇpāṉ nī
uṭalam nōy uṟṟāyō, ūḻitōṟu ūḻiyē? (II–1–4)

Translation

Do you from chronic malady suffer, you chill wind?
Like me you sleep not, by day or night, but try to find

Groping thro' space, hill and dale, our mighty Lord
Who does, in sweet array, Conch and Discuss wield.

Notes

(i) If the wind is chill, the Āḻvār thinks it is due to delirium; if the wind moves about, all over, all the time, gathering all the dust in the process, as is its wont, the Āḻvār thinks that it goes in search of the Lord with the frantic fervour of an importunate lover who dashes off, breaking all norms of feminine conduct, disfigures herself and musters public opinion for the acceleration of her union with her beloved.

(ii) Periyāḻvār searched for the Lord in the milk ocean; Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār went roving round Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the Hill station and other pilgrim centres down below, playing the role of the importunate lover, referred to in (1) above. And here, Nammāḻvār is inclined to think that the wind is also a kindred soul, exhibiting a similar behaviour.

ūḻitōṟu ūḻi ulakukku nīrkoṇṭu,
tōḻiyarum yāmum pōl, nirāy nekiḻkinṟa
vāḻiya, vāṉamē! nīyum matucūtaṉ
pāḻimaiyil paṭṭu, avaṉkaṇ pācattāl naivāyē? (II–1–5)

Translation

Ye clouds, into tears you break for ever
And flood the worlds; do you in sorrow dwindle
Like me and my comrades, under the spell irresistible
Of Matucūtaṉ, coveting Him heart and soul?
May you from misery be free and prosper!

Notes

(i) It is clear from this, that Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki and comrades of her ilk are grief-stricken to such an extent that their profuse tears flood the worlds like the rain-water unleashed by the clouds.

(ii) Matucūtaṉ (Madhusūdha)-Lord Mahā Viṣṇu, Who slew Madhu, the demon. The Āḻvār queries whether the clouds did also come under the spell of the Lord, attracted by His glorious trait of vanquishing the evil forces, in the same way as he and others of his ilk did.

naivāya emmēpōl, nāḷ matiyē! nī in nāḷ
mai vāṉ iruḷ akaṟṟāy; māḷāntu tēmputiyāl;
ai vāy aravu-aṇaimēl āḻip perumāṉār
mey vācakam kēṭṭu, uṉ meynnīrmai tōṟṟāyē? (II–1–6)

Translation

Worn out like us, you withering Moon!
These days, the dark sky you don't illumine;
You have, it seems, lost your erstwhile sheen,
Misled by the utterance of the Lord who the discus holds,
Reclining on the serpent with its five hoods.

Notes

(i) The Moon waxes and wanes because of its different phases, but Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī attributes the waning of the Moon and the resultant diminution of its brightness to a mental malady, on a par with her own.

(ii) In her present state of mental depression, the Nāyakī is so sore with the Lord that she says that the Lord's utterances should not be taken at their face value. No doubt, Śrī Rāma averred that his tongue shall never lie. Unfortunately, however, the Āḻvār reproaches the Lord as being double-tongued like the serpent on which He reclines. The serpent has a double-forked tongue in each of its hoods and here is a serpent with five hoods. And then, it was with His discus that the Lord covered the Sun and converted day into the illusory night; thus, the discus was a pawn in the game, an accomplice of the Lord for carrying out the strategy. If, as Śrī Rāma, the Lord scrupulously adhered to truth, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He would not mind swerving from it, if thereby He could do a good turn to His devotees. It could not, therefore, be said that the Lord was guilty of falsehood, merely

sticking to the letter with academic zeal. without going into the spirit behird His actions. The Lord is beneficial to His devotees both ways, by adhering to the truth, as Śrī Rāma did, and swerving from it, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did. Nampiḷḷai observed: "We seek shelter alike in Rāma's truthfulness and Kṛṣṇa's diplomacy (seeming falsehoods).

tōṟṟōm maṭa neñcam em perumāṉ nāraṇaṟku; em
āṟṟāmai colli aḻuvōmai, nī naṭuvē
vēṟṟōr vakaiyil koṭitāy, eṉai ūḻi
māṟṟāṇmai niṟṟiyō? vāḻi! kaṉai iruḷē! (II–1–7)

Translation

We have unto Nāraṇaṉ, Our Lord
Lost our hearts and we did our sorrows lament
In each other's company but step in you did,
Worse than our foes you are, you darksome night!
May you prosper and from this state be rid.

Notes

(i) This stanza, as worded above, does not accord with the pattern of the preceding and succeeding stanzas in this decad. Based, however, on the diction as such, Emperumāṉar (Rāmānuja) and other Ācāryas were inclined to interpret this song, as follows: The dark night, instead of weeping along with Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī and her comrades, is worse than a foe, in so far as it prevents their seeing each other and bemoaning their common lot of separation from the Lord.

(ii) There is, however, another method of interpreting this stanza, so as to bring it on a piece with the rest. Not knowing that darkness is an inherent quality of the night, Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī sympathises with it and exclaims, "We are already weighed down by our own calamity and here you are, exhibiting your own dire distress of darkness and adding to our miseries. May you soon be rid of this state and prosper!"

iruḷin tiṇi vaṇṇam mā nīrk kaḻiyē! pōy
maruḷuṟṟu irāppakal tuñcilum nī tuñcāyāl;
uruḷum cakaṭam utaitta perumāṉār
aruḷin peru nacaiyāl āḻântu nontāyē? (II–1–8)

Translation

You channel, the dark waters in abundance
You discharge, day and night, bewildered;
Do you also pine, with deep desire, for the grace
Of the Lord who the (demon in the) rolling wheel shattered?

Note

Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī gropes her way through, in darkness, and not being able to distinguish land from water, comes to a channel discharging lots of water and making plenty of noise in the process. She thinks that the channel is also lamenting its separation from Lord Kṛṣṇa, who destroyed Śakaṭāsura and whose grace it pines for.

nontu ārāk kātal-nōy mel āvi uḷ ulartta-
nantā viḷakkamē! nīyum aḷiyattāy!
centāmarait taṭaṅ kaṇ, ceṅkaṉi vāy em perumāṉ
am tāmam taṉ-tuḻāy ācaiyāl vēvāyē? (II–1–9)

Translation

You undying flame, sad indeed is your plight,
Your gentle soul stands withered; burnt are you
By the desire to get the tulacī garland, cool and bright,
Worn by our Lord with large lotus-eyes and lips of red hue?

Notes

(i) Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī returns home in a state of mental exhaustion, and sees the burning lamp. The heat of the flame, she thinks, is the one generated by its separation from the Lord, an experience identical with hers.

(ii) The flame of the lamp is not homogeneous, being of different intensity of heat at different places or zones, as they

are called; the flame itself comes up anew every moment, a fact which can be gathered only by inference. It is an optical illusion that the flame appears to be single, instead of an unbroken succession of different flames. Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī goes by what she sees and calls it an undying flame.

vēvu ārā vēṭkai nōy mel āvi uḷ ulartta
ōvātu irāppakal uṉpālē vīḻttu oḻintāy;
mā vāy piḷantu, marutiṭai pōy, maṇ aḷanta
mūvā mutalvā! iṉi emmaic cōrēlē. (II–1–10)

Translation

Primate of perennial youth, the horse's (Kēci, the demons) big mouth you split,
'Tween the twin trees you crawled and broke them down,
The worlds you measured; in you engrossed, day and night,
Our tender souls, with blistering malady of love struck down,
Have badly dried up, pray, henceforth leave us not.

Note

Seeing the Āḻvār's pangs of separation from Him, the Lord approaches the Āḻvār, shedding His cool grace. Thereupon, the Lord is told by the Āḻvār that his tender soul, already worn out and emaciated due to its separation from the Lord, thaws down still further in contemplation of His wondrous deeds and glorious traits. The Āḻvār also fervently prays to the Lord, not to forsake him any more.

cōrāta eṉ poruṭkum ātiyām cōtikkē
ārāta kātal kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
ōrāyiram coṉṉa avaṟṟuḷ ivai pattum
cōrār, viṭār kaṇṭīr vaikuntam tiṉṉaṉavē. (II–1–11)

Translation

Those that are regular in reciting these stanzas ten,
Out of the thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,

Of love insatiable for the resplendent Lord, the root cause
Of one and all, shall surely enjoy for ever, Heavenly bliss.

Notes

(i) It is only after the Lord came and joined the Āḻvār that He became God indeed, the Protector of one and all, *without any exception*; again, the Lord became resplendent, only after His union with the Āḻvār.

(ii) It is also noteworthy that, in this decad, the Āḻvār has come to be identified through his boundless love for the Lord; that is why he is referred to not as mere Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ but as Caṭakōpaṉ of insatiable God-love.

Second Centum—Second Decad (II-2)
(Tiṇṇaṉ vīṭu)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār was confined to the bottom-most depth of dejection and his yearning for the Lord baffled description. It was but meet that the Lord came and presented Himself before such an ardent devotee and saved him from collapsing altogether. It goes without saying that, when the Āḻvār came, face to face, with the Lord, all his erstwhile dejection and the resultant fatigue vanished altogether. The Āḻvār then made up his mind not to allow himself to be swept off once again, by contemplating the Lord's trait of 'Saulabhya' (easy accessibility). He would rather tackle the other plank, safe and steady, namely, the Lord's overlordship and transcendent glory and sustain himself.

No doubt, in the opening decad of the first centum also, the Āḻvār spoke about the Lord's Supremacy and transcendent glory. But that was in a different key altogether. There it was direct postulation, as such, running parallel to the Vedic texts. Here, the Āḻvār establishes the Lord's Supremacy through an elimination of the claims of the possible contenders for this position of Super-eminence, citing the relevant anecdotes from the 'Itihāsas' and 'Purāṇas.' There it was confined solely to the 'Para' or transcendent state of the Lord in the High Heavens whereas here, the

Supremacy of the Lord is brought out in His ' Vibhava ' or incarnate state. Speaking about the Avatāras (Incarnations), the Lord's wondrous deeds can bear endless repetitions, without satiety. Every time the same trait or deed is repeated, there is a freshness about it, with a new aroma.

tiṇṇaṉ viṭu mutal muḷutum āy,
eṇṇiṉ mītiyaṉ, em perumāṉ,
maṇṇum viṇṇum ellām uṭaṉ uṇṭa nam
kaṇṇaṉ kaṇ allatu illai ōr kaṇṇē. (II–2–1)

Translation

There is no God other than my Sire, Kaṇṇaṉ,
(Whose traits and possessions) defy enumeration,
The granter of ' Mokṣa ', the supreme bliss firm and fine,
Who at once ate up all the worlds, for their sustentation.

Note

The Āḻvār affirms that Lord Kṛṣṇa who enthralled him by His innumerable auspicious traits, is the Supreme Lord of the whole Universe, the granter of Mokṣa, the final bliss. During the period of deluge, He did sustain all the worlds by keeping them within His stomach and this is referred to here, as His having eaten them up. This ' eating up ' actually connotes that the Lord sustains the worlds and their contents within His stomach with the same relish as one has for food. The minor deities, Brahmā, Rudra and others, are also among those, so sustained by the Lord. Need it be specifically said that the one who sustains is superior to those sustained?

ē pāvam! paramē! ēḻ ulakum
ī pāvam ceytu aruḷāl aḷippār ār–
mā pāvam viṭa, araṟkup piccai pey
kōpāla kōlariēṟu aṉṟiyē? (II–2–2)

Translation

Who but Kōpālaṉ, the mighty Lion,
Who unto Araṉ gave alms and from heinous sin

Redeemed, can the seven worlds graciously sustain,
Ridding them of all sins? What a pity, none can
Describe His glory, well beyond enumeration!

Notes

(i) In the preceding stanza, the Āḻvār averred that there is none superior to Kōpālaṉ (Lord Kṛṣṇa). When some persons questioned the propriety of such an assertion in the face of the Vedic texts glorifying Brahmā, Rudra and other Celestials, the Āḻvār turned round and said: "Well, you had better examine the record of performance of each of them and judge for yourselves. When they all got into trouble, each in his own way, they all sought asylum in Lord Maha Viṣṇu. Could there still be any misgiving about His supremacy over all the rest?"

(ii) The Āḻvār feels very much vexed that, in the midst of his God-enjoyment, he should have to leave the track and tackle these deluded enquirers, wasting much precious time in explaining the much-too-obvious, the difference between a priceless gem and poor clay.

(iii) The ill-effects of the sins committed by us, in a trice, can hardly be liquidated even after the sufferings of ages and yet it is the Lord's redemptive grace that grinds them to a halt.

ēṟaṉai pūvaṉai, pūmakaḷ-taṉṉai,
vēṟuiṉṟi viṇ toḷat taṉṉuḷ vaittu,
mēl-taṉṉai mītiṭa nimirntu,
maṇ-koṇṭa, māl-taṉiṉ mikkum ōr tēvum uḷatē? (II–2–3)

Translation

Could there be a God greater than Tirumāl, our Lord,
Who has on His person lodged Ēraṉ (Rudra) and Pūvaṉ
Brahmā

Besides Pūmakaḷ (Lakṣmī, the lotus-born), whom the Devas
Worship, who upwards grew and measured all the worlds?

Notes

(i) See notes below I-3-9 regarding the positions taken up by the exalted Rudra and Brahmā, on the Lord's person.

The Celestials adore the Lord's condescending grace in accommodating, on His broad person, besides Śrī Mahālakṣmī, Rudra and Brahmā.

(ii) As Tṛvikrama, He encompassed all the worlds. These are convincing proofs of His supremacy over all the rest.

tēvum epporuḷum paṭaikkap pūvil nāṉmukaṉaip paṭaitta
tēvaṉ em perumāṉukku allāl, pūvum pūcaṉaiyum takumē?
(II–2–4)

Translation

Can one worship and with flowers decorate
Any one other than ' Emperumāṉ ' (our Supreme Lord)
Who, the lotus-based, four-headed Brahmā, ushered,
The Devas and the rest to create?

Notes

(i) Worship can be offered only to the Supreme Lord and being of exquisite charm, He alone is worthy of decoration.

(ii) Here is an interesting anecdote:

Prior to his absorption into the Vaiṣṇavite fold, Empār, the illustrious Preceptor (a cousin of Śrī Rāmānuja) was, for some time, serving in the Śivā temple at Kāḷahasti, under the appellation of " Uḷḷaṅkai Kcṇarnta Nāyaṉār". One day, when he stood perched on a tree, gathering flowers for the diurnal worship of the Deity, right underneath, Śrī Tirumalai Nampi, his uncle, was discoursing on this particular stanza to his disciples. The votary, high up on the tree, burst out with an emphatic ' NO ', in reply to the question put in this stanza, jumped down, tore off his Rudrākṣa necklace

(worn by the votaries of Rudra and fell at the feet of the learned discourser, seeking refuge in him.

takum cīrt taṉ taṉi mutaliṉuḷḷē
mikum tēvum ep poruḷum paṭaikkat
takum kōlat tāmaraik kaṇṇaṉ, emmāṉ
mikum cōti mēl aṟivār evarē? (II–2–5)

Translation

Does one Know of any other, more radiant
Than our lovely lotus-eyed Lord, omniscient and omnipotent,
Who, by His resolve unique, could bring into being
The Devas, (men) and all other things?

Note

One of the fundamental characteristics of the Supreme Lord is 'Puṇḍarīkākṣatva' (i.e.) His being lotus-eyed. These tell-tale eyes will straightaway proclaim His supremacy. Enthralled by His bewitching looks, the Āḻvār swears that He is the Supreme Lord. c.f. Śloka 12 of the hymnal gems of Yāmuna, where

He queries:

" Who but Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the red lotus-eyed?
Who but He is Puruṣottama, the highest?

evarum yāvaiyum ellāp poruḷum
kavarvu iṉṟit taṉṉuḷ oṭuṅka niṉṟa
pavar koḷ ñāṉa-veḷḷac cuṭar mūrtti-
avar em āḻi am paḷḷiyārē. (II–2–6)

Translation

He Who, in His stomach, holds with ease,
The sentient beings, the non-sentient things and all these,
Is the lovely Lord, of Knowledge immense;
Dear to me, He of exquisite form lies on the *watery expanse.*

Note

This may refer either to the Lord reclining on the milk-ocean or on the watery expanse, during the deluge.

palli ālilai ēl ulakum kollum
vallal val vayirrup perumāṉ
ulul ār arivār-avaṉ-taṉ
kalla māya maṉakkaruttē? (II–2–7)

Translation

Who indeed can plumb the unfathomable mind
Of the Lord Supreme who could hold the worlds seven
In His stomach, big and tough,
And repose on a tender fig- leaf?

Note

Only the Supreme Lord is capable of achieving the seemingly impossible, blending within Himself the incompatibles, such as holding inside His stomach all the worlds and lying as a tender babe on a fig- leaf floating on the waterv expanse. None can indeed probe His mysteries and comprehend them. It can only be said that nothing is beyond Him and there lies the clue to His supremacy.

karuttil tēvum ellāp porulum
varuttitta māyap pirāṉ aṉri, yārē-
tiruttit tiṇ nilai mūvulakum tammul
iruttik kākkum iyalviṉarē? (II–2–8)

Translation

None but Māyappirāṉ (the Benefactor great of mysterious prowess)
Can by a mere resolve create Devas and all else.
Who else can His natural affinity possess
To preserve by sheer will all the three worlds?

Note

This cuts across the popular notion that Brahmā is the functional Deity for creation and Viṣṇu, the Deity for sustentation. Actually, Mahā Viṣṇu controls all the three functions of creation, preservation and dissolution, and Brahmā and Rudra are mere functionaries on His behalf.

kākkum iyalviṉaṉ kaṇṇa-perumāṉ
cērkkai ceytu, taṉ untiyuḷḷē
vāytta ticaimukaṉ intiraṉ vāṉavar
ākkiṉāṉ, teyva ulakukaḷē. (II–2– 9)

Translation

Lord Kaṇṇaṉ Whose nature it is to protect,
Did (at the time of dissolution) collect
All the worlds into His navel and then create
Ticaimukaṉ (Brahmā), Intiraṉ and Vāṉavar (Devas) and their worlds (holy and bright).

Notes

(i) Lord Kṛṣṇa is Supreme, because He controls all the three functions of creation, sustentation and dissolution. It was to dispel the undesirable gloom and grant the coveted felicities that the Lord incarnated as Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(ii) At the time of dissolution, one and all, without any exception, get inside Him. This is then followed by re-creation of the worlds and that way, the cyclic process goes on, epoch after epoch.

kaḷvā! emmaiyum ēḻ ulakum niṉ-
uḷḷē tōṟṟiya iṟaiva! eṉṟu,
veḷ-ēṟaṉ nāṉmukaṉ intiraṉ vāṉavar
puḷ-ūrti kaḻal paṇintu, ēttuvarē. (II–2–10)

Translation

Veḷḷēṟaṉ (Rudra), Nāṉmukaṉ (Brahmā), Indra and Vāṉavar (Devas) congregate
And worship at the feet of the Lord with that bird (Garuḍa) as His mount
And unto Him, pray 'Iṟaiva' (by your resolve), you brought out
The seven worlds and us all and yet you will hide out,
Like a thief, your greatness and to us for favours resort".

Notes

(i) The Celestials, including Rudra, with the white bull as his mount, the four-headed Brahmā, Indra and others of that exalted band, seek various boons from Mahā Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord, and their power to grant, in turn, the wishes of their votaries is thus derived from Him alone. And yet, they wish to tickle their vanity by making it appear that even the Supreme Lord seeks favour from them. It is noteworthy, Lord Kṛiṣṇa just tickled the vanity of Rudra when He sought from the latter that He be blessed with a son through His consort, Rukmiṇī. It is for this that the Lord has been referred to, in this stanza, as a thief.

(ii) Divya Kavi (The poet, *par excellence*), Piḷḷai Perumāḷ Ayyangār exclaims: "Oh, Lord, what a paradox that you, from whom all things emanate, are dubbed a thief for having stolen butter! Actually, we are the thieves, who think and act as if we are our own, not realising that we belong to you, the rightful owner".

ētta ēḻ ulakum koṇṭa kōlak
kūttaṉaik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col
vāytta āyirattuḷ ivai pattuṭaṉ
ētta vallavarkku illai ōr ūṉamē. (II–2–11)

Translation

For those who learn and laud these songs ten,
Out of the thousand bequeathed unto us, by Kurukūr Caṭa-
kōpaṉ,
In adoration of the enchanting Lord, who did span
With ease, the worlds seven, drawbacks there will be none.

Notes

(i) Those, who learn these ten songs and enter into their spirit will be firm in their conviction that Mahā Viṣṇu is the Supreme Lord; they will thus be free from the drawbacks of (i) not looking upon Mahā Viṣṇu as the Supreme Lord and (ii) looking upon Deities other than Mahā Viṣṇu, as Supreme. For the matter of that, the

solitary episode of Trivikrama, of charming beauty, measuring effortlessly all the worlds in just three strides, is enough to assert Mahā Viṣṇu's Supremacy.

(ii) The Lord's Supremacy has been set out, in this decad, under various counts, namely, destruction of the sins of devotees and ridding them of distress, being lotus-eyed, friend-in-need, achieving the impossible and blending the incompatibles, laudation by the exalted celestials, Rudra, Brahmā and others, control of all the three functions of creation, sustentation and dissolution and so on.

Second Centum—Third Decad (II-3)
(Ūṉil vāḻ uyirē)

Preamble

In the first decad of this centum, we saw the Āḻvār in dire distress. Towards the end, the Lord, however, deigned to present Himself and once again, the Āḻvār is in rapturous rapport with the Lord. In this decad, he gives vent to the joy of reunion with the enchanting Lord. In strict sequence, this should have been the second decad instead of being the third. The Āḻvār's immediate reaction, on seeing the Lord come back to him, was, however, that one of such super eminence, the overlord of the Celestials, should have at all deigned to mingle with one so low. And, therefore, he straightaway expatiated on the Lord's transcendental glory, in the second decad.

ūṉil vāḻ uyirē! nallai, po! uṉṉaip peṟṟu,
vāṉuḷār perumāṉ, matucūtaṉ, eṉ ammāṉ,
tāṉum yāṉum ellām taṉṉuḷḷē kalantoḻintōm:
tēṉum pālum neyyum kaṉṉalum amutum ottē. (II–3–1)

Translation

Oh, ye mind, dwelling in the fleshy body,
You are indeed good; because of you, It (this vassal)

Could with Matucūtaṉ, my Lord, mingle, chief of Celestials
And into Him dissolve like honey, milk, nectar and candy.

Notes

(i) In this decad, where the Āḻvār gives vent to his joy of communion with the Lord, the one he was pining for, praise is first bestowed on his forward mind which had overtaken him in its flight to God, seeking the bliss of union with Him. This is like a prince, restored back to his lost kingdom by some one, thanking that person first. The word 'Uyir' (soul) in the original text, by implication, refers to the mind, the principal adjunct, stirring up one's thoughts either way.

(ii) The last line refers to the blend of all that is delicious and it can either be an admixture of all these delicacies or the mixture of like things only, (i.e.) honey with honey, milk with milk, nectar with nectar and so on.

ottār mikkārai ilaiyāya mā māya!
ottāy ep poruṭkum, uyir āy, eṉṉaip peṟṟa
at tāy āy, tantai āy, aṟiyātaṉa aṟivittu,
attā! nī ceytaṉa aṭiyēṉ aṟiyēṉē. (II-3-2)

Translation

There's none above you, Oh, Lord of wondrous traits!
And none equal to you, and yet forms you'd take
Like all others; you are the life-giver
To one and all, the Mother that yielded me, the Father
And Preceptor, 'tis beyond me to list out all your favours.

Notes

(i) While patting on the back of his forward mind, in the preceding song, the Āḻvār realised that even such an evolved mind was but the Lord's gift and, therefore, he passed on to sing the glory of God.

(ii) When this song was discoursed upon, by that great preceptor, Empār, the question was raised by some one in the learned assembly as to who is the first spiritual

preceptor for every Individual. Some said, "The Guru who imparts the requisite spiritual knowledge", while some others observed "It is the Śrī Vaiṣṇava who puts us on to the spiritual preceptor for acceptance". Empār, however, clarified: "Indeed, the Lord, seated in the region of our heart, is the first Preceptor, hidden and unseen though, for it is He who, from His vantage position inside us, granted us the impulse not to resist but to yield to the good offices of the visible preceptors outside and of the helpers who put us on to such preceptors.

aṟiyāk kālattuḷḷē aṭimaikkaṇ aṉpu ceyvittu,
aṟiyā mā māyattu aṭiyēṉai vaittāyāl;
aṟiyāmaik kuṟaḷ āy, nilam māvali mūvaṭi eṉṟu
aṟiyāmai vañcittāy, eṉatu āviyuḷ kalantē. (II–3–3)

Translation

Wonderful 'tis, you got into my mind,
And in me, in (the clutches of) this mystic land,
Still immature, did instil the desire to serve you around,
Even as you did on the sly, obtain the land
Of three strides from Māvali (Mahābali), as Vāmaṉa, the little lad.

Note

The present versification conforms to the interpretation given by Śrī Rāmānuja, duly changing the prose order of the text, as in the original, quite in keeping with the current milieu. Śrī Rāmānuja was taught the meaning of this song by his spiritual Instructor (Tirumālai Āṇṭāṉ), as follows, without any change in the prose order of the poem (as in the original text).

"You instilled in me the desire to serve you at a time when I was hardly evolved and yet, you have kept me wallowing in worldly life, the hot-bed for ignorance, instead of promoting my God-love and providing the necessary incentives therefor".

Śrī Rāmānuja had, however, no hesitation in pointing out to the learned Instructor that, put that way, it would be a reproach against the Lord and would, therefore, be a misfit in this decad, where the Āḻvār gives vent to the joy of Union with the Lord and sings His glory.

eṉatu āviyuḷ kalanta peru nal utavik kaimmāṟu
eṉatu āvi tantoḻintēṉ; iṉi mīḷvatu eṉpatu uṇṭē?
eṉatu āvi āviyum nī, poḻil eḻum uṇṭa entāy!
eṉatu āvi yār? yāṉ ār? tanta nī koṇṭākkiṉāiyē. (II-3-4)

Translation

My Sire, Who did in your stomach sustain
The worlds seven, you dissolved into my soul;
For this great good, my soul I offer you, in return,
There isn't any going back; but what is my soul?
Who am I? what is yours indeed, you have taken,
You are the Giver great, the Soul of my soul.

Notes

For all the good done to him by the Lord, the Āḻvār wanted to recompense Him and so, he offered his soul to the Lord, adding, with extra gusto, that it was a firm offer from which he would not recant. A little introspection, however, made him realise that there is hardly anything which does not belong to God and there is, therefore, no question of surrendering the soul to the Lord to whom it rightly belongs. What is it that is being surrendered and whose was it before the surrender? To surrender to the Lord that which already belongs to Him would be tantamount to the assumption of an ill-conceived right of ownership of the thing surrendered, in derogation of the divine right of ownership.

These very sentiments were echoed by Saint Yāmuna in ślokas 52 and 53 of 'Stotra Ratna' (hymnal gems). Well, the dilemma in which Saint Nammāḻvār and Saint Yāmunācārya were caught up, is bound to present itself to every one of us, as long as we live in this abode. Scared by the horrors of earthly existence, one is tempted to surrender one's soul to the Lord, as if it is one's own and could be

bartered away in this manner, and then the correction follows, based on the realisation of one's essential nature and the inter-relationship between Man and God. Surrendering oneself unto the keeping of the Lord, with the full awareness and awakening of one's essential nature (svarūpa), as the Lord's own, solely dependent on Him, stands, however, on a different footing.

iṉi yār ñāṉaṅkaḷāl eṭukkal eḷāta entāy!
kaṉivār vīṭṭu-iṉpamē! eṉ kaṭal-paṭā amutē!
taṉiyēṉ vāḻ-mutalē! poḻil ēḻum ēṉam oṉṟāy
nuṉi ār kōṭṭil vaittāy! nuṉa pātam cērntēṉē. (II–3–5)

Translation

My Lord, mere learning, however profound, Can't comprehend Thee,
Unto your lovers you are the fountain of heavenly bliss;
You are my nectar, not that stuff from the Saltish sea,
But the very source of life for this lover peerless;
On your pointed tusk, you lifted the worlds seven,
As the Boar unique and so have I your feet now attained.

Note

The Āḻvār rejoices that he has been reclaimed by the Lord from the Ocean of Samsāra, even as He reclaimed the Earth from under the Oceanic waters, after slaying Hiraṇyākṣa, the golden-eyed demon.

cērntār tīviṉaikaṭku aru naňcai, tiṇ matiyai,
tīrntār-tam maṉattup piriyātu avar uyiraic
cōrntē pukalkoṭāc cuṭarai, arakkiyai mūkku
īrntāyai, aṭiyēṉ aṭaintēṉ, mutal muṉṉamē. (II–3–6)

Translation

Unto your devotees, you vouchsafe a mind steady and bright,
Never apart from the devout, you are their very life and beacon light,

A deadly poison for their sins, the devil's (Sūrpaṇakhā's) nose
you smote,
From the earliest time this vassal is at your feet.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār affirms that he always belonged to the Lord and rejoices, now that he is in the Lord's company, forgetting all the pangs of the earlier separation.

(ii) It is said that one has to inevitably pass through the reactions of one's past actions. But this is true only in the case of those who are not devoted to the Supreme Lord, while, in respect of the devout, He operates as a deadly poison, destroying all their sins.

(iii) Steadfastness of mind is indeed one of His great gifts. Here is a nice illustration.

When king Ambaṛṣa was doing *Tapas*, in devout contemplation of Lord Mahā Viṣṇu, the Lord appeared before him, disguised as Indra and insisted that the King should ask of him boons. As Indra was not the Deity the King was meditating upon, the latter resented the former's intrusion and requested him to get away, his exalted position notwithstanding

(iv) When a lustrous gem is reclaimed from the slush into which it had got sunk for long, it shines again as before, as this sheen is nothing new and the lustre always belonged to it. Similar is the case with the Āḻvār who always belonged to the Lord, but stands reclaimed only now.

muṉ nal yāḻ payil nūl narampiṉ mutir cuvaiyē!
pal-nalār payilum paraṉē! pavittiraṉē!
kaṉṉalē! amutē! kār mukilē! eṉ kaṇṇā!
niṉ alāl ilēṉkāṇ; eṉṉai nī kuṟikkoḷḷē. (II–3–7)

Translation

You are the delectable melody, chaste and matured,
From the ancient lyre, and by the eminent adored;

Oh, Lord! pure and Supreme, sweet like nectar and cane juice
My cloud-hued Kaṇṇā! I do seek refuge
In none but you, take note and make me yours.

Notes

(i) Notwithstanding the assertion, as in the last song, that he belonged to the Lord from time immemorial, the Āḻvār apprehends the frightful possibility of getting separated from the Lord, over again, and he, therefore, entreats Him to note that he cannot brook separation from Him Who is sweetness itself. The sweetness of music which attracts the cow, the infant and the snake alike, is proverbial, and the Lord is the very source of this sweetness.

(ii) That the Lord is pure needs no special mention but what is emphasised here is that He purifies worldlings like us and makes us fit to join the rank and file of the pure souls in the yonder Heavens.

kuṟikkoḷ ñāṉaṅkaḷāl eṉai ūḻi cey tavamum
kiṟikkoṇṭu, ip piṟappē cila nāḷil eytiṉaṉ yāṉ–
uṟikkoṇṭa veṇṇey pāl oḷittu uṇṇum ammāṉ piṉ
neṟikkoṇṭa neñcaṉāyp piṟavit tuyar kaṭintē. (II–3–8)

Translation

Right in this birth and in a short space
Have I attained what others achieve down the ages
Through deep penance and Knowledge intense,
Freed from the miseries of birth, all by the grace
Of my Lord, who stole and ate from hanging hoops
Milk and butter, with my mind unto Him very close.

Note

The Āḻvār could attain the Lord right now, not by following the disciplines, rigid and rigorous, but solely by His Grace which alighted on him while contemplating the boyish pranks of the Lord, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, eating stealthily, the milk and butter, stored up in hanging hoops, in the pastoral village of Gokula.

kaṭi vār taṇ am tuḷayk kaṇṇaṉ, viṇṇavar perumāṉ,
paṭi vāṉam iṟanta paramaṉ, pavittiraṉ cīr,
ceṭi āṟ nōykaḷ keṭa, paṭintu kuṭaintu āṭi,
aṭiyēṉ vāymaṭuttup parukik kaḷittēṉē. (II-3-9)

Translation

Sporting the Cool tulacī garland, full of fragrance,
Kaṇṇaṉ, Chief of Celestials, has no equal,
Even in heaven; unto Him, pure and supreme, this vassal
Could come close and get rid of sins, vast and dense,
Revelling and singing profusely His traits auspicious.

Note

The Āḷvār rejoices that he could partake of the heavenly bliss even here, as the Lord is right with him in all His celestial grandeur, the dense sins which stood between him and the Lord having been eradicated, root and branch, by His grace. It is a case of the immaculate Lord purifying one and all falling within the purview of His sweet, spontaneous grace.

kaḷippum kavarvum aṟṟu, piṟappup piṇi mūppu iṟappu aṟṟu,
oḷikkoṇṭa cōtiyumāy uṭaṉkūṭuvatu eṉṟu kolō–
tuḷikkiṉṟa vāṉ, in nilam-cuṭar-āḻi caṅku ēnti–
aḷikkiṉṟa māyap pirāṉ aṭiyārkaḷ kuḻāṅkaḷaiyē? (II-3-10)

Translation

Oh, when shall I enter and enjoy the holy gatherings
Of devotees of the wondrous Lord, holding the conch and discus radiant,
Protector of Heaven and Earth, the light that all knowledge illumines,
Getting rid of pleasures worldly and the resultant sufferings,
Birth and death, old age and pestilence?

Note

In the preceding song, the Āḷvār gave vent to his supreme joy, exclaiming that the very heavenly bliss had come to him, right here.

The Lord asked the Āḻvār whether there was anything more He could do for him. The Āḻvar replied:

"My Lord, there is no doubt that I have found Heaven on Earth. But then, the fear whether the present enjoyment can go on for all time without interruption, haunts me situated as I am, in this material body, with all the ailments flesh is heir to, surrounded by the material world, swayed by the wayward senses. And, therefore, this body should go and the scene shifted to the uncontaminated High Heavens where I could enjoy the holy company of the 'Nityas' (ever-free angels) and the 'Muktas' (the released souls)".

kuḷām koḷ pēr arakkaṉ kulam vīya muṉintavaṉai
kuḷām koḷ teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ terintu uraitta
kuḷām koḷ āyirattuḷ ivai pattum uṭaṉ pāṭi,
kuḷāṅkaḷāy, aṭiyīr! uṭaṉkūṭiniṉṟu āṭumiṉē. (II–3–11)

Translation

Dance, ye devotees! in a body, singing diligently, these songs ten,
Out of the cluster of thousand learned songs of Caṭakōpaṉ,
Chief of the apostles of Ten Kurukūr, in adoration
Of the irate Lord, who routed the demon (Rāvaṇa) and his battalions.

Note

In this end-stanza, there is a departure from the usual pattern of setting out the benefits of learning and singing the ten songs in each decad. The Āḻvār emphasises the importance of these ten songs being sung in a chorus by the devotees, as an end in itself. It may also be construed that those who learn these ten songs will have the felicity of singing them in the holy company of devotees, unlike the Āḻvār, who languished for want of such an association. It is worth repeating here the following exhortation of Nampiḷḷai, the great Preceptor:

"Until you reach the Eternal Land, the few of you who are devoted to the Supreme Lord, should, during the few days

of your stay in this abode, sink all petty differences, based on lust and lucre, and sing, in one voice, the Lord's glory, for your common enjoyment and edification''

Second Centum—Fourth Decad (II-4)
(Āṭi āṭi)

In the penultimate song of the last decad the Āḷvār expressed his desire to sing profusely the glory of the Lord in a chorus. Looking around, he, however, found the prospect of mustering persons from the rank and file of the worldlings for this purpose pretty bleak. He had, therefore, no option but to shift the venue of his enjoyment to the high Heavens and sing the Lord's praise in the company of the 'Nitya Sūrīs' there. This ardent longing of the Āḷvār was, however, not realised there and then and once again the Āḷvār was thrown into deep dejection assuming the overtones of a frustrated feminine lover in a state of despondency. The Āḷvār had got into such a state on two earlier occasions, namely I-4 and II-1. On the first occasion he sent some birds as his emissaries to the Lord, while, on the second occasion, all things around seemed to suffer, like him, the pangs of separation from the Lord and he, therefore, wept along with those comrades-in-distress. But now his grief is so deep and poignant that all that is said in this decad is put in the mouth of the mother who questions the Lord how He could reduce her love-intoxicated daughter to such a parlous state and asks Him to clarify His intentions as to what exactly He proposes to do about the poor little victim.

No doubt, it is the Āḷvār who sings, and yet, this assumes the form of a mother's dialogue with the Lord indicating an extremely critical state so far as the Āḷvār is concerned. This is like the swollen river Kāverī or Gangā branching off into rivulets, going by different names but carrying the same water as in Kāvērī or Gangā. The necessity for the mother's intervention here, in this decad, unlike the two earlier decads referred to above can be understood if we probe into the genesis of each of these three decads. It is a matter of common knowledge that the grief over the loss of a thing varies in direct proportion to the value one attaches to the

thing lost. For example, as between the loss of a silver piece and a gold piece, the latter causes a far more grievous feeling of privation. If the same person, later on, lost a neeklace set with costly gems and rubies it would be the worst blow. And now let us analyse the cause of the Āḻvār's grief at the commencement of each of the two earlier decads. In I-3-10 the Āḻvār wanted to adore and embrace the Lord's pair of feet which spanned the entire Universe during His Avatār as Trivikrama. But he couldn't get at those feet and, in the grief that ensued, he sent the birds on an errand to the Lord as in I-4. Again, in I-10-9, the Āḻvār devoutly longed for communion with the Lord in His Iconic form in the pilgrim centre, Tirukkuruṅkuṭi (deep south in Tamiḻ Nādu). Non-materialisation of this ardent desire brought on grief far more intense than on the earlier occasion in view of the relatively greater importance of the thing now lost, namely, communion with the Lord in His Iconic manifestation, a veritable ocean of innumerable excellances vis-a-vis His Incarnate form which is like the river, once in spate, now turned dry or turgid. And now what is the position? In II-3-10 the Āḻvār pined for entry into the gatherings of the devotees and singing profusely the glory of the Lord in their steadfast company. But this did not happen immediately, and naturally, the loss is the worst so far on the analogy of the successive loss of silver, Gold and gem-studded necklace. So great is the importance attached to the company of the Godly. This accounts for the induction of the mother into the scene.

It might be questioned why this decad complains at the door of the Lord instead of being couched as an appeal to the band of the devotees on the Yonder side, whose company the Āḻvār pines for but could not have. Well, the complaint was always lodged with the King, the aggrieved party rushing to the Palace gate even though the gems and rubies were looted by robbers in the jungle. As a matter of fact it is only the Lord who grants us all felicities including participation in the gatherings of the Godly and hence, the appeal at His door.

āṭi āṭi akam karaintu, icai
pāṭip pāṭik kaṇṇīr malki, eṅkum
nāṭi nāṭi, naraciṅkā! eṉṟu
vāṭi vāṭum iv vāḻ-nutalē. (II–4–1)

Translation

This young dame of forehead bright,
Keeps rattling, with a mind worn out;
Looking out all over she sings and sings,
Cries out. "Oh, Naracinkā!" and sinks.

Notes

(i) The mother exclaims:

"Alas! my daughter feels let down by the Lord who, as Narasimha (Man-Lion), came to Prahlāda's aid. Restive and rattling, she looks out for Him everywhere, her heart melts down in contemplation of the Lord and she cries out for Him in melodious notes expressive of her melancholy".

(ii) The tears flowing down the cheeks of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī in torrents remind us of Hanumān's query to Sītā, the Divine Mother in captivity, why tears were rolling down her cheeks.

(iii) Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī is looking out here, there and everywhere for the Lord who, she is sure, will never fail to succour His devotees. As Narasiṅkā He had studiously stationed Himself in every nook and corner, pillar and particle. While discoursing on this song, Śri Parāśara Bhaṭṭar said:

"Parāṇkuśa Nāyakī is looking for the Lord even in the folds of her sari.". Had He not once got on to the hip of the Āḻvār in the course of His ascent to the Āḻvār's head? (I-9-4).

(iv) Says the gnostic mother: "My daughter is indeed worried, over and over again, whether the Lord would help only Prahlāda and not her. She has not, however, given up hopes as yet and that is why life is still sticking to her". Face is the index of the mind and Parāṅkuṣa Nāyakī's lingering hopes are reflected on her forehead.

vāḷ-nutal im maṭavaraḷ, ummaik
kāṇum ācaiyuḷ naikiṉṟāḷ; viṟal
vāṇaṉ āyiram tōḷ tuṇittīr! ummaik
kāṇa, nīr irakkam ilīrē. (II-4-2)

Translation

To behold you (of beauty exquisite),
Who, the thousand arms of mighty vāṇaṉ smote,
This young lady of forehead bright
Stands consumed by a burning desire,
But your grace on her you don't confer.

Notes

(i) "Oh, Lord Kṛṣṇa, You secured Uṣā, the daughter of the mighty Bāṇāsura for Aniruddha, your grandson, after chopping off the Asura's thousand sinewy shoulders. And yet you would not relent in the case of my daughter and relieve her distress".

(ii) Reference has again been made to the bright forehead of Parāṅkuṣa Nāyakī only to betray the mother's surprise at the Lord's indifference even to one of such fascinating charm.

(iii) *Mother to the Lord*

"Oh, it is all topsy-turvy my daughter pining for you! It should be the other way around. It is indeed the Owner who should be all agog to get at his property."

The Lord retorts saying, "Well, your daughter's desire to get at me may be all right but the impediments to the realisation of her desire are heavier still".

But then, the mother is not prepared to swallow this. She asks Him "For one who smote the thousand arms of the mighty Bāṇāsura, is it at all difficult to cut out these impediments?"

irakka manattōṭu eri aṇai
arakkum meḷukum okkum ivaḷ;
irakkam eḻīr; itaṟku eṉ ceykēṉ-
arakkaṉ ilaṅkai ceṟṟirukkē? (II-4-3)

Translation

You, who the demon's Laṅkā did rout,
Relent not for this dame of tender heart,
Who is like unto wax set on fire;
Oh, what can I do for her?

Note

Mother to the Lord

"What you did to reclaim Sītā from her captivity in Laṅkā, how you languished without food and sleep days on end, how you bunded the roaring sea and routed Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā, lock, stock and barrel have been chronicled by sage Vālmīki in his immortal Rāmāyaṇa. And so it is well within the Knowledge of my hapless daughter. Therefore it is she feels tormented why she couldn't get a similar treatment at your hands. Oh, what a contrasting picture! my daughter of melting tenderness of heart, like the wax come in contact with fire, and you, absolutely hard-hearted and unrelenting. What can I do, in between? There is no remedy for this situation except the influx of your sweet grace. I daresay you who did so much for Sītā, will not lay yourself open to the charge of cruel partiality and terrible discrimination by not coming to my daughter's aid, at once."

ilaṅkai ceṟṟavaṉē! eṉṉum; piṉṉum,
valam koḷ puḷ uyarttāy! eṉṉum; uḷḷam
malaṅka vev uyirkkum; kaṇṇīr mikak
kalaṅkik kaitoḻum niṉṟu ivaḷē. (II-4-4)

Translation

Says unto you my daughter, oh, Lord,
"Laṅkā, (for Sītā's sake) you destroyed
And on your banner is the mighty bird (Garuḍa)";
With a mind agitated and breathing hot,

Tears well up her eyes and badly upset,
And stunned she stands, with joined palms.

Notes

Mother to the Lord

(i) "I thought I had consoled my daughter saying that she should sustain herself meditating on your meritorious deeds as Śrī Rāma with the firm belief that you will, some day, succour her as you did Sītā. Even Sītā had to wait for quite some length of time before she was reclaimed from her captivity in Laṅkā. But suddenly my daughter has started crying as before. But then, She says that you were pining for Sītā all the time, but you just can't remember this poor girl. It is not as if you lack the means of locomotion if only you wished to come and meet my daughter. She is well aware that the mighty Garuḍa, moving at supersonic speed, is always at your disposal. And so she concludes it is sheer indifference on your part. On the other hand she is very much agitated and bursting with tears. Nevertheless, with joined palms she is worshipping You. I just don't know what to do".

(ii) It is worth noting that, whatever be the mood and mode of speech of the Āḻvār, be he calm or agitated, his basic stance as the Lord's sole servitor (Śeṣatva) remains quite *in tact*; in other words, his essential nature (svarūpa) does not undergo any modification. That is how reference is made to the Parāṅkuṣa Nāyakī's worshipping posture even in such an extremely critical state of mental cogitation (see, in this connection, aphorism 119 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayam').

ivaḷ irāppakal vāyverīt taṉa
kuvaḷai oṇ kaṇṇa nīr koṇṭāḷ; vaṇṭu
tivaḷum taṉ am tuḷāy koṭir-eṉa
tavaḷa vaṇṇar takavukaḷē? (II-4-5)

Translation

Day and night this girl keeps babbling
And in her flowery eyes tears are swelling;

You don't on her bestow your tulaci garland, cool and lovely,
Swarmed by bees; What has happened, (I can't see)
To you of disposition pure and your quality of mercy.

Note

(i) Mother to the Lord

"Well, if you don't relent even in such a precarious condition of my daughter what indeed has happened to your quality of mercy? Has it dried up altogether?

My daughter is talking about you all the time whereas it should be the other way round. We know from Hanumān's report to Sītā how you kept pining for her, spending sleepless days and nights, thinking and talking about her all the time. Oh, what a pity! the eyes of my daughter which should shed tears of joy are bursting with sorrow. After all, what does she want from you? Nothing more than the cool tulaci garland from your person in replacement of the withered one on her feverish body, consumed by the pangs of separation from you. Actually, she envies the bees gaily swarming your garland studded with honey, and even wishes that she had been born as one of those fortunate bees".

(ii) Reference has been made by the mother to the Lord's purity of disposition and quality of mercy in this context rather sneeringly. Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar would put it that the mother means to say, "Well, if there were a few persons like you the girls would indeed prosper very well!"

takavu uṭaiyavaṉē! eṉṉum; piṉṉum,
mika virumpum pirāṉ! eṉṉum; eṉatu
aka-uyirkku amutē! eṉṉum-uḷḷam
uka urukiniṉṟu uḷuḷé. (II-4-6)

Translation

Says my daughter, with a mind thawing,
Right from the inner core of her being,
"Oh, Lord! you are indeed merciful,

You are my highly coveted Benefactor,
And to my inner soul, the nectar".

Notes

(i) In the preceding stanza the mother complained about a heartless Lord, who had put her daughter in such a parlous predicament. But no sooner had the mother opened her mouth, with such a reproach on her tongue than the daughter (Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki) gagged it effectively, despite her pangs of separation from the Lord, by proclaiming that the Lord is an inexhaustible fountain of grace and a highly coveted Benefactor. To dub Him as devoid of mercy would be just as inconceivable as the ocean getting emptied of all its water.

(ii) A close parallel to this can be found in Rāmāyaṇa, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 26-13 where, even while bemoaning her captivity in Laṅkā, Sītā extolled the great qualities of Śrī Rāma and lamented that one of such excellence had not so far come to her rescue merely because she lacked the requisite felicity, being totally devoid of grace because of the offence thrown by her, once at Rāma and a much greater offence at Lakṣmaṇa later on. This clearly shows that there can be absolutely on flaw or drawback in the Lord warranting His being given up on any account, even in trying moments of separation from Him. As a matter of fact, what is sought to be classified as a drawback in the Lord, if at all, is just the mental agony inflicted by Him on the devotees when He doesn't favour them with His nectarean presence. But even this has a purpose behind, forming, as it does, part of the Lord's technique of shock-treatment whereby the devotee's appetite for God is whetted.

uḷuḷ āvi ularntu ularntu, eṉa
vaḷḷalē! kaṇṇaṉē! eṉṉum; piṉṉum,
veḷḷa nīrk kiṭantāy! eṉṉum-eṉa
kaḷvi tāṉ paṭṭa vañcaṉaiyē! (II-4-7)

Translation

Enticed by the Lord is my daughter
And her inner soul is fully dried
And yet from me she tries to hide
And cries out, "Oh, my liberal Lord,
Kaṇṇā, resting on oceanic waters".

Notes

(i) With an aching heart the mother gives expression to her daughter's enticement by the Lord and her present critical condition. The soul which is inherently incapable of being burnt or dried up, is said to have been dried up in Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī's case. And yet, she tries to keep her mother off the track and lauds her beloved Lord.

(ii) Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī says her Lord is a great Benefactor, a liberal donor and all that, just like a person in deep thirst calling repeatedly, 'water, water' or chewing up bits of refined camphor.

(iii) In Viṣṇu dharma, one is advised to meditate on Lord Narasimha, while moving about in a frightfully dark night, to ward off evils; likewise, one, in dire distress or deep thirst, should think of the Lord reclining in the milky ocean.

(iv) Śrī Rāma had exclaimed that he couldn't be away from Sītā, the dark-eyed, even for a trice.

The Lord's position vis-a-vis Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī should also be just the same and yet, the mother witnesses things happening in the reverse order here and she, therefore, calls it a mere treachery.

vañcaṉē! eṉṉum; kaitoḷum; taṉa
neñcam vēva neṭitu uyirkkum-viṟal–
kañcaṉai vañcaṉai ceytīr! ummait
tañcam eṉṟu ivaḷ paṭṭaṉavē! (II–4–8)

Translation

Oh, Slayer of heady Kañcaṉ, here is my daughter
Who in you refuge sought and is now in great distress;

The heavy sigh she heaves, her heart blisters ;
And yet, with folded hands she does your treachery own,
How You made her your vassal, to her unknown.

Notes

(i) When the mother complained in the previous song about the treacherous enticement of her daughter by the Lord, Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī could not bear this affront to her beloved Lord. Uttering the same word, 'treachery', as the mother did, the Nāyakī gives it a different complexion. The Lord's treachery lies in the great good He has done her by making her His vassal *unknown to her.*

(ii) The daughter's distress, referred to by the Mother, can be analysed as follows:

She does not go after food and raiment like the worldlings;

Nor does she enjoy the heavenly bliss like the celestials in Heaven;

She cannot wait patiently till, one day, the final goal is reached;

Nor does the Lord finish her off as He did the heady Kamsa, upsetting all his nefarious plans.

How tantalising, and that too, for one whose sole refuge is the Lord! This is the mother's complaint.

paṭṭa-pōtu eḻu-pōtu aṟiyāḷ; virai
maṭṭu alar taṇ-tuḻāy eṉṉum-cuṭar
vaṭṭa vāy nuti nēmiyīr! numatu
iṭṭam eṉkol, iv ēḻaikkē? (II—4—9)

Translation

Neither Sun-rise nor Sun-set, my daughter knows
And yet her mouth utters "tulacī, cool and fragrant,
Studded with honey", Oh Sire, holding the discuss effulgent,

Sharp and round! what indeed do you propose
To do with this girl who is so innocent?

Notes

(i) Unlike the worldlings who know day and night too well, earning by day and spending by night those earnings on worldly pleasures, Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki is altogether ignorant of Sun-rise and Sun-set. Does it mean that she is not sentient? She is no doubt sentient as her mouth constantly utters the words 'tulacī cool and fragrant, studded with honey'.

(ii) When the Lord was indifferent to the above observations of the mother she asked Him;

"Sire, the effulgent discus in your hand is ever ready to go into action, helping your devotees and destroying the evil-doers. What precisely do you intend to do with my daughter? Will you get rid of her as you did Hiraṇya and his brood?

or

Will you elevate her to the rank of the celestials on the Yonder heaven and enjoy her bewitching beauty, enhanced still further by the conch and discus in her hands?

or

Will you put her back among the worldlings buried in earthly pleasures oblivious of their essential nature and their relationship with you?"

ēḷai pētai irāppakal taṉa
kēḷ il oṉ kaṇṇa nīrkoṇṭāḷ; kiḷar
vāḷvai vēva ilaṅkai ceṟṟīr! ivaḷ
māḷai nōkku oṉṟum vāṭṭēṉmiṉē. (II–4–10)

Translation

Laṅkā's spectacular wealth you routed, Oh, Sire,
This poor girl's eyes of peerless beauty shed tears

Day and night; may you keep, at least,
The youthful looks in her eyes in tact!

Notes

Mother to the Lord

"The tears welling up my daughter's eyes day and night resemble the water drops around the lotus leaf shining like pearls, a sight indeed for you which you cannot afford to miss. Actually it is you that had worked her up to such a pitch and would you not like to behold and enjoy the fruits of your labours?

Is it not a sight for Gods, the rapturous ravishment of the love-smitten Saint, when his whole being thrills with love and his eyes swim with pearls of tears?

If you think that there are heavy impediments in the way of your joining my daughter can't you eradicate them even as you routed the demoniac Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā? Well, if you are intent upon destroying my daughter also, please do not go the whole hog out as you did in the case of Rāvaṇa, but spare at least her bewitching looks which is about all that remains of her now.

If she passes away we will lose her. But mind you, you will lose your very source of sustenance. You are known to subsist on the sweet looks of your consorts. It is up to you now not to run into a personal loss of such a magnitude".

vāṭṭam il pukaḻ vāmaṉaṉai icai
kūṭṭi, vaṇ caṭakōpaṉ col amai
pāṭṭu ōr āyirattu ip pattāl aṭi
cūṭṭalākum am tāmamē. (II–4–11)

Translation

Those that recite these songs ten,
Out of the thousand melodious songs of Caṭakōpaṉ,
Graciously composed and grammatically clean,
In adoration of Vāmaṉaṉ of undying renown,

Will have the fortune great,
To offer lovely flowers at His feet.

Notes

(i) Those that recite these ten songs will be endowed with the bliss of rendering perennial service at the feet of the Lord in the company of the 'Nitya Sūris' in Heaven, the very bliss coveted by the Āḻvār at the end of the last decad, without passing through any of the sufferings undergone by the Āḻvār.

(ii) In the first song of this decad reference was made to Parāṅkuṣa Nāyakī withering down. Actually her condition reflects the state of the Lord as well. And now that mention is made of Vāmaṉaṉ of undying fame, it can be inferred that He rose to His full stature by responding to the mother's call to preserve her daughter's looks, the very source of His sustenance. And so He is back again face to face with the Saint.

(iii) Mention has been made here of Vāmaṉaṉ, in particular, as He was known to be very keen about the reclamation of His possessions even if it involved His having to seek alms. And now, will He lag behind even after the mother had begged of Him to take particular care of His very source of sustenance?

Second Centum Fifth Decad (II-5)
(Am Tāmattu Aṉpu)

Preamble

The sufferings undergone by the Āḻvār, as set out in the last decad, are comparable to the titanic struggle of Gajendra, the elephant, with the crocodile. Even as the Lord rushed, with an aching heart, to the pond post-haste on hearing the alarum raised by the elephant the Lord felt exceedingly remorseful that He did not rush to meet the Āḻvār as soon as the latter became critical of His nonchalance, that is, His not rushing to his aid despite His having the mighty Garuḍa to carry Him anywhere at supersonic

speed. See II-4-4. By way of making amends for this remissness, the Lord has now come to the Āḷvār, in all His splendour and paraphernalia and is at the height of His joy in the blessed company of the Saint. Beholding the joyous Lord, the Saint feels immensely delighted and relates, in this decad, his ecstatic experience.

am tāmattu aṉpu ceytu eṉ āvi cēr ammāṉukku
am tāmam vāḷ muṭi caṅku āḻi nūl āram uḷa ;
centāmaraittaṭam kaṇ; ceṅkaṉi vāy ceṅkamalam ;
centāmarai aṭikaḷ; cempoṉ tiru-uṭampē. (II–5–1)

Translation

The Lord stands in my soul stationed,
Looking upon it as the lovely Heaven, wears He a pretty garland,
The dazzling crown, conch and discus, sacred thread
And chain; His eyes are like red lotus ponds,
His lips and feet also like lotus red, aglow is His person like red gold.

Notes

(i) It is the Lord's will that the Āḷvār should be kept in this abode a little longer for the benefit of humanity at large. The Āḷvār, however, aspired to enter the gatherings of the celestials in the yonder Heaven and sing the Lord's glory profusely and for ever in their holy company. See II-3-10. As a compromise, the Lord meets the aspiration of the Āḷvār by conferring on him the heavenly bliss longed for by him right here. The Āḷvār rejoices that the Lord exhibits unto him all that love which He bears for the celestials and describes the Lord's glowing features.

(ii) Tirumālai Āṇṭāṉ, referred to earlier, told Śrī Rāmānuja, while studying this song, that he had heard it said by his preceptor, yāmunā‹ārya, that the Āḷvār rejoices in this song as the Lord has joined him along with the entire band of 'Nityā Sūrīs' as apired for by him. But Śrī Rāmānuja opined that this song relates how the Lord's person, His jewels, weapons etc, all of which

lacked lustre and were as good as non-existent before He mingled with the Āḷvār, now shine with extra brilliance which fascinated the Āḷvār so much.

(ii) Yet another version is: In that section of the Vedās, known as the 'Antarāditya Vidya,' the Lord is said to shine inside the Sun, assuming a body glittering like gold, lotus-eyed, bejewelled and so on; the Lord has now entered the Āḷvār's person with all that splendour.

tiru-uṭampu vāṉ cuṭar; centāmarai kaṇ; kai kamalam;
tiru iṭamē mārvam; ayaṉ iṭame koppūḷ;
oruvu iṭamum entai perumāṟku araṉē; ōl
oruvu iṭam oṉṟu iṉṟi, eṉṉuḷ kalantāṉukkē. (II-5-2)

Translation

Oh, what a wonder! the Lord who holds on His chest
Tiru (Lakṣmī), whose navel is Brahmā's seat while the rest
Is by Araṉ held, has with me mingled, leaving vacant
No space in my body; beams my Sire's body with rare brilliance
And aglow like the lotus red are His eyes and hands.

Notes

(i) Lakṣmī, the Divine Mother, stands ensconced on the Lord's chest; Brahmā, the demi-urge, appointed by the Lord to create all the fourteen worlds, would not budge from His navel and the rest of the Lord's body is occupied by Araṉ (Rudra). One so great has now come and taken possession of the entire body of the Āḷvār. Thrilled by his contact with the Lord's exquisite person, the Āḷvār describes His lustrous body. When He casts loving glances at the Āḷvār, the latter sees His lotus eyes proclaiming His overlordship (Sovereignty and Supremacy). Apprehending the frightful possibility of the Āḷvār once again resiling, overwhelmed by the Lord's Sovereignty, the Lord catches hold of the Āḷvār by the hand. At once, the Āḷvār describes the lotus hand that gripped him.

(ii) While discoursing on this song, the great Preceptor, Naññiyar feelingly remarked:

(iii) "The Āḻvār, who is our greatest well-wisher, speaks of the Lord's body beaming with brilliance. Indeed, there is hardly a sin as heinous as denying the Lord, His form and attributes, even as there is no favour done by the Lord to us, so great as this one of our being kept outside the pale of such a heresy".

(iv) It is noteworthy that it is not a mere fantastic visionary but Saint Śaṭakōpa, endowed by an Omniscient Lord with knowledge, full and complete, shorn of doubts, despair, discrepancies and deviations, (See I-1-1) that goes into raptures over the Lord's exquisite Form. Compare also, Lord Rāma offering His body, in embrace, to Hanumān, the glorious emissary, on the latter's return from his pioneering visit to Laṅkā, deemed by the Lord as the choicest gift, He could māke, befitting the particular context. Surely, it was not an illusory or fictitious body that the Lord palmed off as the choicest gift but one most coveted by Himself and specifically assumed by Him for the purpose of His avatāra.

eṉṉuḷ kalantavaṉ ceṅkaṉi vāy ceṅkamalam;
miṉṉum cuṭar-malaikkuk kaṇ, pātam, kai kamalam;
maṉṉum muḻu ēḻ ulakum vayiṟṟiṉ uḷa;
taṉṉuḷ kalavātatu ep poruḷum tāṉ ilaiyē. (II–5–3)

Translation

The One, in me mingled, sparkles like a dazzling mount,
Like unto the lotus red are His mouth, eyes, feet and hands,
His stomach does all the worlds seven sustain,
There's scarcely a thing that doesn't in Him converge.

Notes

(i) Not only Lakṣmī, Brahmā and Rudra, but whatever exists subsists in Him alone. Even so, it is now made to appear that the Lord cannot subsist except by

mingling with the Āḻvār. who has, in this context, given Him yet another name (like Nārāyaṇa Vāsudēva) namely, 'The one in me mingled'.

(ii) The Lord is in full bloom and joy only after He mingled with the Āḻvār and has acquired stability like a mountain. The Lord's resplendent person, eyes, mouth, hands and feet, all resembling red lotus, are indeed far more attractive now, than ever before, having acquired new dimensions. Little wonder then, the Āḻvār is never tired of describing the Lord's exquisite form and His charming features, as reoriented.

ep poruḷum tāṉ āy, maratakak kuṉṟam okkum;
appoḻutait tāmaraippūk kaṇ pātam; kai kamalam;
eppoḻutum nāḷ tiṅkaḷ āṇṭu ūḻi ūḻitoṟum
appoḻutaikku appoḻutu eṉ ārā amutamē. (II–5–4)

Translation

The Lord, who in Him all things contains,
Like unto an emerald mount shines;
With eyes, feet and hands, like red lotus in fresh bloom,
A non-satiate nectar unto me He is, at all times,
Thro' days, months. years and aeons.

Note

In his preamble to this song, the illustrious Nampiḷḷai says: Seeing the Āḻvār comparing repeatedly the Lord's eyes, lips, hands and feet to red lotus, some persons asked him why he went on repeating the same thing. The Āḻvār rejoined, "Well, I cannot help saying so, for every moment, down the days, months, years and a whole epoch, there is a freshness about Him, like the lotus in fresh bloom and hence there is no room for satiety nor is there any question of an insipid repetition of something, stale and static.

ārā amutamāy alāviyuḷ kalanta
kār ār karumukil pōl eṉ ammāṉ kaṇṇaṉukku
nērā vāy cempavaḷam, kaṇ pātam kai kamalam;
pērāram nīḷ muṭi nāṇ piṉṉum iḻai palavē. (II–5–5)

Translation

The non-satiate nectar, the cloud-hued Lord,
Has into my worthless soul entered;
Can the fruits red compare with the lips of Kaṇṇaṉ, my Sire;
Or the lotus flower match His eyes, hands and feet, ever?
Many indeed are His jewels, the crown, tall and majestic,
The necklace huge, waist band and all that.

Note

The Āḷvār who was hitherto comparing the Lord's lips to red fruits and His eyes, hands and feet to the red lotus flower, has now a closer look at the Lord inside him and finds that the Lord is of matchless beauty and incomparable excellence and that the things hitherto compared with Him, stand nowhere. Then the Āḷvār beholds the vast array of jewels on the Lord's person and starts enumerating them, only to give it up as impossible. The Lord's crown, tall and majestic, proclaims His sovereignty over the entire Universe, comprising the two Vibhūtis 'Nitya Vibhūti' (Eternal Land) and the 'Līla Vibhūti' (Sportive Universe).

palapalavē āparaṇam; pērum palapalavē;
palapalavē cōti vaṭivu; paṇpu eṇṇil,
palapala kaṇṭu, uṇṭu, kēṭṭu, uṟṟu, mōntu iṉpam;
palapalavē ñāṉamum: pāmpu-aṇai mēlārkēyō! (II–5–6)

Translation

The Lord who on serpent bed reclines,
(Has acquired inside me dimensions new);
Were I to pause and examine His union
With me, an endless variety unto me He unravels,
Of jewels, Forms exquisite and how in me He revels
Thro' the sensual channels many with appropriate Know-how.

Notes

(i) The Āḷvār feels that the Lord, in union with him, is not satisfied with His assumption of a single form, a single set of jewels, a single method of enjoyment of the Āḷvār through the senses of seeing, smelling etc,

or single type of knowledge but wants to enjoy the Āḷvār in myriad ways, employing different techniques, assuming different forms, displaying different sets of jewels, so on and so forth

(ii) As Nampiḷḷai puts it, the Lord wants to enjoy the Āḷvār, assuming many forms, as Sage Śaubhari did, with regard to his umpteen wives. The Lord exhibits the same ardour in His enjoyment of the Āḷvār as the emancipated soul does, on reaching Heaven, for enjoying the Lord.

pāmpu-aṇaimēl pāṟkaṭaluḷ paḷḷi amarntatuvum,
kāmpu aṇai tōḷ-piṉṉaikkuāy ēṟu uṭaṉ ēḻ ceṟṟatuvum,
tēm paṇaiya cōlai marāmaram ēḻ eytatuvum,
pūm piṇaiya taṇ-tuḷāyp poṉ muṭi am pōr ēṟē. (II-5-7)

Translation

Trim and lovely, like the martial bull, my Lord,
Sporting the gold crown and the tulaci garland,
Cool and well-knit, on the serpent-bed reclined
In the milk-ocean, tamed all at once the bulls seven
For the sake of Piṉṉai of shoulders fine and pierced the trees seven.

Notes

(i) In terms of the new technique adopted by the Lord, as set out in the previous song, the Lord exhibited a few of the wondrous deeds performed by Him long back and the Āḷvār records them here, as envisioned by him.

(ii) According to one tradition, Nappiṉṉai, the charming shepherdess, believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Nīḷā Devi, was a niece of Yaśodhā. Her father had set up a precondition for any one seeking her hand, namely, the taming of seven unruly bulls, all at once. Śrī Kṛṣṇa assumed seven different forms, tackled these bulls effectively and tamed them to win the charming bride. A Demon named Kālanēmi had been slain by the Lord in a previous Yuga. The seven sons of the

demon swore vendetta against the Lord and were reborn as seven bulls, determined to kill Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

poṉ muṭi am pōr ēṟṟai, emmāṉai, nāl-taṭam tōḷ
taṉ muṭivu oṉṟu illāta taṇ-tuḷāy mālaiyaṉai,
eṉ muṭivu kāṇātē eṉṉuḷ kalantāṉai,
colmuṭivu kāṇēṉ nāṉ; colluvatu eṉ? collīrē. (II–5–8)

Translation

Majestic like the warring bull is my Lord,
Sporting the gold cown, of sinewy shoulders four,
Of limitless glory, wearing the cool tulacī garland;
Mingled He with me, not minding my status poor,
Falter do I as I attempt to sing His glory interminable,
Better tell me how to laud (my Lord), ye worldlings voluble!

Notes

(i) The Āḷvār says that it is beyond his capacity to describe the condescending love of One, so great, mingling with him, so low.

(ii) The Lord's crown and tulacī garland proclaim His sovereignty. If His glory is limitless, there is also no limit to the Āḷvār's abjectness and yet He has chosen to mingle with the Āḷvār. By His deeds and traits, the Lord enthralled the Āḷvār who, however, finds that words are not adequate to describe his experience. On the other hand, the worldlings revel in their own spheres and wax eloquent. The Āḷvār turns round and asks them how they could freely indulge in all that rhetoric, when he himself suffered from tardiness of expression, overawed.

collīr eṉ ammāṉai; eṉ āvi āvitaṉai;
ellai il cīr eṉ karumāṇikkac cuṭarai:
nalla amutam, peṟaṟku ariya vīṭum āy,
alli malar virai ottu, āṇ allaṉ; peṇ alaṉē. (II–5–9)

Translation

Better sing the praise of my Sire,
The Soul of my soul, the lustrous sapphire,

Of auspicious qualities endless, the delectable nectar,
The Ordainer great of 'Mokṣā', difficult to attain,
Sweet like the fragrance of the lotus flower,
Neither the male nor the female we know of.

Notes

(i) Although the Āḷvār found himself speechless, yet he could not resist the urge to sing the Lord's praise, in the company of the worldlings. And, therefore, he exhorts them to desist from the worldly affairs, at least for a while, and sing the Lord's glory along with him.

(ii) Being a 'Puruṣa' (Male), the Lord is certainly not a female and being a 'Puruṣottama' (gem of a male), He is very different from the other males, we know of. That is why it has been said here that He is neither the male nor the female *of the known variety*.

āṇ allaṉ; peṇ allaṉ; allā aliyum allaṉ;
kāṇalum ākāṉ; uḷaṉ allaṉ; illai allaṉ;
pēṇuṅkāl, pēṇum uru ākum; allaṉum ām:
kōṇai peritu uṭaittu em pemmāṉaik kūṟutalē. (II–5–10)

Translation

'Tis indeed very difficult to sing precisely, my Lord's glory
Neither male nor female is He nor the eunuch neutral,
He exists not, nor does He not exist;
Him the naked eye can't see and yet He assumes
The form the devout desire while unto others He is just inaccessible.

Note

In Ṛig Veda, 'Āraṇyaka', the Lord is said to be quite apart, that is, different from the rest. Therefore it is, the Āḷvār says that He is neither male nor female, nor the 'in-between'. A Tamil Pundit, who was listening to Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's discourse on this song, observed that it smacked of the doctrine of nothingness (Śūṉya), as the Lord could not be brought under any of the three known categories of beings. But the learned discourser pointed out that, in this song, the

Lord has not been referred to, in the neuter gender but described only in the masculine gender, as a male, who is, however, very different from other males and hence not the male, we know of.

kūṟutal oṉṟu ārāk kuṭak kūtta ammāṉaik
kūṟutalē mēvik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
kūṟiṉa antāti ōr āyirattuḷ ip pattum
kūṟutal vallār uḷarēl, kūṭuvar vaikuntamē. (II–5–11)

Translation

Those that can recite these stanzas ten,
Out of the thousand sung by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Keen to recount the traits, beyond description,
Of (Lord Kṛṣṇa), the great pot-dancer, will the high heaven attain.

Notes

(i) Those, conversant with this decad, will atain Heaven without undergoing any of the sufferings, passed through by the Āḷvār as set out in the last decad. It is like the sons enjoying, with ease, the property acquired by the father, by dint of hard labour and sufferings.

(ii) It is not the Lord's transcendental glory that baffles description but His easy accessibility and wondrous deeds like pot-dancing etc., during His Avatār as Lord Kṛṣṇa. If, however, the Āḷvār could manage to talk about the Lord's 'Saulabhya' or simplicity galore, it is indeed the victory of his faith, his deep love for God, infused in him by the Lord Himself.

Second Centum–Sixth Decad (II-6)
(Vaikuntā Maṇivaṇṇaṉē)

Preamble

As set out, in the last decad, the Āḷvār is experiencing the Supreme bliss of Union with the Lord, like Heaven transplanted right here. And what about the Lord? In the supreme joy of

His union with the Āḷvār, the Lord is exploring new avenues of regaling him as well as those associated with him. What a fine reciprocity?

In II-3, the Āḷvār pined for the company of the Lord's devotees and now the Lord's love for the Āḷvār extends to his devotees as well. But at the same time, He also apprehends the possibility of the Āḷvār slipping back to his old ways and shrinking away from Him, overwhelmed by His transcendent glory. The Āḷvār feels the Lord's pulse all right and hastens to assure Him that he would not give up his Lord on any account and that his present grip on Him is very tight indeed.

Śrī Nampiḷḷai likens the Lord's apprehension, referred to above, to Śrī Rāma's apprehension whether the extremely happy days, he and Śīta had in Citrakūṭ in each other's delightful company, would at all go on for all time, being too good to last long.

vaikuntā! maṇivaṇṇaṉē! eṉ pollāt tirukkuṟaḷā! eṉṉuḷ maṉṉi,
vaikum vaikal tōṟum amutu āya vāṉ ēṟē!
cey kuntā arum tīmai uṉ aṭiyarkkut tīrttu, acurarkkut tīmaikaḷ
cey kuntā! uṉṉai nāṉ piṭittēṉ; koḷ cikkeṉavē. (II–6–1)

Translation

Of sapphire hue, oh, Vaikunta! (Lord of Heaven)
My lovely midget (Vāmana)! in my heart, steadfast you remain,
Oh, Chief of celestials! unto me You are nectarean,
Every fleeting moment; You redeem Your devotees' dire sins
And to the Acuras You just pass them on.
Kuntā (Immaculate Lord)! firm unto You I hold on, please note.

Notes

(i) In the last decad, even while enjoying the bliss of the Lord's union with him, the Āḷvār referred to himself as worthless (II-5-5) and as being lowly without limit, even as there is no limit to the Lord's greatness (II-5-8). Naturally, expressions such as these roused the suspicion of the Lord that the Āḷvār, whose company He covets so much, might once again be caught up in a vein of abject humility and want to run away from Him. But

the Āḻvār assures an agitated Lord that He could trust him, when he says that he won't think of leaving Him at all. Here is a picture, in the reverse order, if one recalls a similar assurance held out by Lord Kṛṣṇa to an agitated Arjuna. (Gītā XVIII-66).

(ii) Reference to Vāmana, in the second line of this stanza, is given a beautiful turn by Nampiḷḷai. Vāmana Mūrtī's charming personality and wonderful comportment, baffling description, were lost on all else except the Āḻvār, who was enthralled by these qualities of the Lord and could get Him lodged in his heart. This was indeed a great loss to Indra, who was mindful of his only gain merely, the return of his lost kingdom and to Mahābali, whose only concern was to maintain his reputation as a great donor. There was absolutely no question of the others then on the scene, the ungodly Śukrācārya, who was made to lose his eye, and Namuṣi, who was hurled, high up in the sky, having been attracted by Vāmana's enthralling charm. The sole beneficiary is, therefore, Nammāḻvār, in whom such a charming Lord now stands enshrined.

(iii) The grip of the Āḻvār on the Lord is said to be so tight that even the Lord cannot shake him off, if He wished to do so.

cikkeṉac ciṟitu ōr iṭamum puṟappaṭāt taṉṉuḷḷē ulakukaḷ
okkavē viḻuṅkip pukuntāṉ; pukuntataṟpiṉ, [eṅkum
mikka ñāṉa veḷḷac cuṭar-viḷakkuāy, tuḷakku aṟṟu, amutamāy,
pakkam nōkku aṟiyāṉ, eṉ paintāmaraik kaṇṇaṉē (II–6–2)

Translation

With all the worlds in His stomach, neatly compressed
(And all His regal duties, duly disposed)
The resolute Lord has got inside me and thus transposed,
His radiant Knowledge, in spate, shines forth like the lamp bright;
Feeling firm and secure, with the assurance from me got,

My nectar, the lotus-eyed Lord, sees not
This side or that (and is in me so rapt).

Notes

(i) In the original text of this stanza, mention has been made of the Lord having gulped down all the worlds and kept them secure in His stomach, before entering the Āḻvār's body. What the poet intends to say is that the Lord attended not only to this particular duty but all His other regal duties, as well, so that, once He enters the Āḻvār's body, His rapport with the Āḻvār may go on undisturbed, unlike the worshipper, ostensibly in front of the Deity in the Sanctum Sanctorum, but anxious, all the time, about the safety of the pair of new Sandals, left by him at the temple gate.

(ii) The Knowledge of the Omniscient Lord is said to have acquired new dimensions after His entering the Āḻvār's body and thus shines with extra brilliance. And then, so completely rapt and engrossed with the Āḻvār is the Lord that He wouldn't turn His attention elsewhere, not even when Lakṣmī, the Lord's favourite spouse, puts her fair arms round His neck and draws Him extremely close to her breast. The following anecdote is very apt and can easily drive home the point.

(iii) On being informed by his preceptor, Maṇakkāl Nampi (Śrī Rāma Miśra), that one Kurukaikkāval Appaṉ had a Yogic secret to communicate, Āḷavantār (Yāmuna) journeyed all the way to Kaṅkaikoṇṭa-Cōḻapuram, to meet the said Yogi. As Appaṉ was seated, deeply engrossed in Yoga, facing a wall, Āḷavantār dared not disturb the Yogi and kept himself behind, at some distance. Lo! Appaṉ suddenly turned round and enquired whether some one belonging to the 'Coṭṭai' clan was standing behind. While humbly introducing himself as one of the said pedigree, Āḷavantār begged the Yogi to disclose how the presence of one staying well behind was at all

perceived. Appaṉ revealed that, while holding a rapport with him, the Lord would not allow Himself to be disturbed by any one including His alluring and most-beloved spouse, Lakṣmī, and yet, pressing his neck, the Lord turned round, thrice or four times, in the hind direction. The Yogi was well aware that such an extra-ordinary preference was shown by the Lord only to members of the 'Cc ṭṭai' family and hence his enquiry, as above. Āḷavantār was the grandson of Śrīmaṉ Nāthamuṉi of 'Cc ṭṭai' pedigree (the family name). This shows that next to Nammāḷvār, affection of such great magnitude was lavished by the Lord, only on Śrīmaṉ Nāthamuṉi and his descendants.

tāmaraik kaṇṇaṉai, viṇṇōr paravum talaimakaṉai, tuḷāy viraip
pū maruvu kaṇṇi em pirāṉai, poṉmalaiyai [alar
nām maruvi naṉku ētti uḷḷi vaṇaṅki nām makiḻntu āṭa, nāvu
pā maruvi niṟkat tanta pāṉmaiyēl vaḷḷalē! (II–6–3)

Translation

Adored by the Celestials, the lotus-eyed Lord,
My benefactor great wearing the tulaci garland,
Knit with fragrant flowers, a veritable mountain of gold,
Him even we could well extol, singing thro' songs,
by us composed,
And dancing in ecstasy, meditate and worship, how generous
of Him indeed!

Notes

(i) Entranced by the sweet glances from His lotus eyes, the celestials keep singing His glory, all the time. It was indeed very generous of the Lord, as the Āḷvār would put it, that He could likewise enable even him, so low, to meditate on Him and compose songs in His praise and sing besides revealing to him, out of His own free will and grace, His exquisite beauty, bedecked with tulaci garland, ever cool, ever lovely and ever fragrant.

(ii) Reference to the Lord, as a mountain of gold, shows that He is firmly established inside the Āḻvār, firm as a rock.

vaḷḷalē! matucūtaṉā! eṉ marakata malaiyē! uṉai niṉaintu,
eḻkal tanta entāy! uṉṉai eṉṉaṉam viṭukēṉ– [ukantu,
veḷḷamē purai niṉ pukaḻ kuṭaintu āṭip pāṭik kaḷittu, ukantu
uḷḷa nōykaḷ ellām turantu, uyntu pōntiruntē? (II–6–4)

Translation

My generous Lord! Matucūtaṉā! my delectable emerald Mount!
My Sire! unto me You granted a mind, in you engrossed,
Immersed in Your oceanic traits singing in merriment
Your glory great and dancing; from all ills and evils released,
You I have attained, how shall I give you up indeed?

Note

In the preceding song, the Āḻvār was again harping on his lowliness while acknowledging the many favours done to him by the Lord. Naturally, such expressions of the Āḻvār's abject humility make the Lord ill at ease but the Āḻvār hastens to assure Him that, as the recipient of His spontaneous grace in the form of multifarious favours, he shall not give up the Lord, on any account. These favours include, of course, the removal of many an impediment in the way of their union, not the least of which is the Āḻvār's inferiority complex, even as the Lord slew the demon, Madhu. All the erstwhile miseries and shortcomings of the Āḻvār stand drowned in the rapturous enjoyment, currently going on, singing and dancing in great merriment. There is, therefore, no question of his giving up such a generous Lord.

uyntu pōntu, eṉ ulappu ilāta vem tīviṉaikaḷai nācam ceytu,
antam il aṭimai aṭaintēṉ; viṭuvēṉō– [uṉatu
aintu paintalai āṭu aravu-aṇai mēvip pāṟkaṭal yōka nittirai
cintai ceyta entāy! uṉṉaic cintai ceytu ceytē? (II–6–5)

Translation

My Sire! in thoughts of universal welfare absorbed,
You rest in the milky ocean, on Your five-hooded serpent-bed;
Meditating on You, ever and anon, I stand delivered
From my endless sins deadly and now in your perennial service ushered
Will I from you ever try to get severed?

Notes

(i) Totally absorbed, that he is, in the daily service of the Lord, the Āḻvār avers that there is no question of his giving Him up.

(ii) Ādiśeṣa (First servant) on whom the Lord rests in 'Yoga Nidrā', the highest form of psychic activity or self-activisation, is steeped in the enjoyment of perennial service unto the Lord, in many ways. Through each of his five heads, he gives vent to his joy, like the river in spate branching off into canals. Even as those under the influence of liquor dance about, Ādi-Śeṣa, intoxicated with God-love, gives expression to it by making his heads (hoods) dance with joy.

uṉṉaic cintai ceytu ceytu, uṉ neṭu mā moḻi icai pāṭi, āṭi, eṉ
muṉṉait tīviṉaikaḷ muḻu vēr arintaṉaṉ yāṉ;
uṉṉaic cintaiyiṉāl ikaḻnta iraṇiyaṉ akal mārvam kīṇṭa eṉ
muṉṉaik kōḷariyē! muṭiyātatu eṉ eṉakkē? (II–6–6)

Translation

Mighty Narasiṅka! my primordial Lord!
You split the broad chest of Iraṇiyaṉ, the demon,
Who inwardly despised you but here am I, fully delivered
From my age-long sins meditating on you, ever and anon,
Dancing and singing sweetly your glory great
Is there at all anything, this vassal of Yours cannot get?

Notes

Lord: Oh, Āḻvār! is there any thing more I can do for you?

Āḷvār: Sire! what is there I haven't got from you? My age-long sins have been rooted out, with a mind solely rivetted in you, I go on singing your great glory and dance in ecstasy. What more do I need?

The Lord is more keen to reward people than to punish them. Even if one's praise of Him is only lip-deep, the Lord generously takes it at its face value, without probing deeper and exposing the hollowness. His omniscience and omnipotence notwithstanding. On the other hand, when one throws affront at Him, He does not straightaway punish without probing whether the offence was really meant or only casual. That is why Lord Narasiṁka explored Hiraṇya kaśipu, limb by limb, joint by joint, whether there was in him any love lurking for Him anywhere inside the demon. Unfortunately, there was none and the demon had to be vanquished.

muṭiyātatu eṉ eṉakkēl iṉi? muḻu ēḻ ulakum uṇṭāṉ ukantu vantu
aṭiyēṉ uṭpukuntāṉ; akalvāṉum allaṉ iṉi;
ceṭi ār nōykaḷ ellām turantu, emar kīḻ mēl eḻu piṟappum
viṭiyā vem narakattu eṉṟum cērtal māṟiṉarē. (II-6-7)

Translation

What is there, this vassal cannot henceforth attain?
The Lord, who gulped down all the worlds seven,
Entered my mind with great relish, never again
To part from me; those unto me connected for generations,
Seven above and seven below, will from their sins dense
Be freed, and never again shall they enter the cruel abyss,
bottomless.

Notes

(i) The bottomless (endless) abyss or eternal hell, referred to here, is the 'Samsāra', the stye of worldly life, in which the worldlings are wallowing, caught up in its interminable labyrinth.

(ii) In the preceding song, the Āḷvār declared that there was nothing he could not attain. When asked by some persons whether he had got everything, the Āḷvār

affirmed that the Lord's benevolent grace did not stop with him alone but extended to all those connected with him, the preceding and succeeding generations alike—that being the case, what more would he need?

māṟi māṟip pala piṟappum piṟantu, aṭiyai aṭaintu, uḷḷam tēṟi,
iṟu il iṉpattu iru veḷḷam yāṉ mūḻkiṉaṉ;
pāṟip pāṟi acurar-tam pal kuḻaṅkaḷ nīṟu eḻa, pāy paṟavai oṉṟu
ēṟi viṟṟiruntāy! uṉṉai eṉṉuḷ nīkkēl entāy! (II–6–8)

Translation

Passed I thro' several gates of birth,
From time to time and now at your lovely feet,
With a mind, pure and chaste,
Immersed am I in the bottomless ocean of mirth.
Mounted on that bird unique, leaping afar, my Sire,
Routing the Asura hordes! pray leave me never.

Notes

(i) Reference to the unique bird (Garuḍa) here is very significant. Even as the Lord presses Garuḍa into service, all the time and never gets parted from him, the Āḻvār prays that the Lord should take service from him for all time, keeping him in close proximity.

(ii) What is it that the Āḻvār did, to attain the feet of the Lord? "Absolutely nothing" is the answer. He went on, taking birth after birth, till one day, the Lord's spontaneous grace alighted on him and took him to His vicinity, like unto the twig in the mid-ocean getting washed ashore, by successive waves.

entāy! taṇ tiruvēṅkaṭattuḷ niṉṟāy! ilaṅkai ceṟṟāy! marāmaram
paintāḷ ēḻ uruva oru vāḷi kōtta villā!
kontu ār taṇ am tuḻāyiṉāy! amutē! uṉṉai eṉṉuḷḷē kuḻaitta em
maintā! vāṉ ēṟē! iṉi eṅkup pōkiṉṟatē? (II–6–9)

Translation

My Lord! gracing Tiruvēṅkaṭam, you stand on the cool mountain,
You routed Laṅkā, pierce you did the tough trees seven

With a single arrow, lovely tulaci garland, bushy and cool
You sport, my Nectar! into me dissolved you, my darling!
Chief of Celestials!
Is there anywhere You can get away hence?

Note

Āḻvār to the Lord: "Unto me, who was steeped in ignorance, you revealed yourself and your excellence and worked me upto the present pitch, when I just cannot exist without you. Will it be just and proper for you to get parted from me, at this stage? As a matter of fact, you stepped on Mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam, only to get hold of this vassal. Even as you routed Rāvaṇa and his Laṅkā, you eradicated my conceit and arrogance. Even as you instilled confidence in Sugrīva, before slaying his brother, Vāli, by piercing the cluster of seven 'sāl' trees, with a single arrow, you whetted my love for you by exhibiting your auspicious traits. Having mingled with me, *in toto*, without reservation of any kind, how can you at all get parted from me hereafter and where else will you go?"

The fact of the matter is that the blending of the two is so perfect that they are no longer two separate entities but just a single entity.

pōkiṉṟa kālaṅkaḷ, pōya kālaṅkaḷ, pōku kālaṅkaḷ, tāy, tantai,
ākiṉṟāy! uṉṉai nāṉ ataintēṉ, viṭuvēṉō? [uyir
pākiṉṟa tol pukaḷ mūvulakukkum nātaṉē! paramā! taṇ
mēkiṉṟāy taṇ-tuḷay virai nāṟu kaṇṇiyaṉē! (II–6–10) [vēṅkaṭam

Translation

Having got you, shall I ever leave you, the Super-eminent?
Lord of all the three worlds, you grace Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the cool mount,
Cool tulaci garland of fragrance sweet you do sport,
Of eternal fame, far-reaching, You are unto me dear
As Father, Mother and Soul, at all times, past, present and future.

Notes

(i) *Lord to the Āḻvār*: "Well, you are asking me, not to leave you. But my anxiety is about you, whether you might

once again run away from me, struck down, by your feeling of lowliness. Please, therefore, assure me that you will not leave me and go".

Āḻvār to the Lord : Reply as in the stanza, above.

(ii) A doubt might be raised how the Āḻvār could talk about the benefits he would be receiving, in future, as well. Well, the Lord is the Sole Benefactor, at all times, past, present and future. After all, the present is itself, the future of the past and will, in turn, become the past of the future. Time-sequence makes no difference at all, the Lord being the constant Benefactor, at all times.

kaṇṇit taṉ am tuḻāy muṭik kamalat taṭam peruṅ kaṇṇaṉaip
naṇṇi, teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ māṟaṉ coṉṉa [pukaḻ
eṇṇil cōrvu il antāti āyirattuḷ ivaiyum ōr pattu icaiyoṭum
paṇṇil pāṭa vallāravar kēcavaṉ tamarē. (II–6–11)

Translation

Those that sing tunefully these songs ten,
Out of the thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ
Scion of Māṟaṉ, singing the glory of the Lord, with large lotus-eyes,
Wearing on His crown the tulacī garland, cool and nice
Will join the rank and file of Kēcavaṉ's (the Lord's) devotees.

Note

The glory of the Lord, referred to here, in particular, is His boundless love (vyāmoha) for His devotees, like that shown unto the Āḻvār. To become His devotee, one has only to sing these ten songs, tunefully. Caste, creed and colour shall not stand in his/her way.

Second Centum—Seventh Decad (II-7)
(Kēcavaṉ tamar)

Preamble

In the seventh stanza of the last decad, the Āḻvār had mentioned that the Lord's benevolent grace did not stop with him alone but overflowed its continents and extended to all those connected with

him in the preceding and succeeding generations as well. Overwhelmed by this extraordinary benevolence of the Lord the Āḻvâr expatiates on it in this decad.

Of the numerous auspicious traits of the Lord extension of His love and care not only to His devotees but all those associated with them, is indeed exemplary.

After Rāvaṇa was slain by Śrī Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa was called upon to perform the funeral rites of his brother. But then Vibhiṣaṇa demurred, saying that he would not do any such thing for such a great sinner as Râvaṇa. Śrī Rāma (the very personification of Grace) had, however, no bitterness towards Rāvaṇa and all the bitterness was only on the part of Rāvaṇa, an one-sided affair! Now that Rāvaṇa was dead he would no longer repel Śrī Râma's good offices, that is, if Vibhīṣaṇa performed the funeral rites at Śrī Rāma's bidding. If Vibhīṣaṇa still demurred and declined to act, Śrī Rāma would do it himself; if Vibhīṣaṇa was a brother unto Rāma, so was Rāvaṇa, as Vibhīṣaṇa's brother. There are several other instances where the Lord extended the area of His benevolence, bringing within its purview all those associated with His devotees. This is being illustrated in this Tiruvâymoḻi.

The Lord's twelve principal names, Keśava, Nārāyaṇa etc., are dealt with in these stanzas, in the same order in which these names are recited by the devotees in the course of their diurnal prayers. There are, therefore, 13 stanzas in this decad (12+1 end-song), as against the usual 11 stanzas (10+1 end-stanza).

kēcavaṉ tamar kīḻ mēl emar ēḻ eḻu piṟappum;
mā catir itu peṟṟu nammuṭai vāḻvu vaykkiṉṟavā!-
īcaṉ, eṉ karumāṇikkam, eṉ ceṅkōlak kaṇṇaṉ, viṇṇōr–
nāyakaṉ, em pirāṉ, emmāṉ nārāyaṇaṉālē. (II–7–1)

Translation

My delectable blue gem, Master of all,
Of red-lotus-eyes lovely, Chief of the Celestials,
Nārāyaṇaṉ, my Lord and Benefactor has elevated
As *Kēcava's* (His) devotees, all with me associated,

Seven generations, up and down, how grand
Is the growth of our spiritual wealth indeed!

Notes

(i) 'Kēcava' yields three meanings, viz,:

(a) One with lovely locks of hair,

(b) Slayer of Kcśi, the demon—Śrī Kṛṣṇa and

(c) Progenitor of Brahmā and Śiva.

(ii) Reference to seven generations, up and down, follows the trend in the Vedic texts.

(iii) The spiritual growth resulting from the Lord's spontaneous grace is indeed astounding; the progress made by our own efforts will but be tiny in comparison.

nāraṇaṉ; muḻu ēḻ ulakukkum nātaṉ; vēta mayaṉ;
kāraṇam, kiricai, karumam, ivai mutalvaṉ; entai;
cīr aṇaṅku amarar piṟar palarum toḻutu ētta niṉṟu
vāraṇattai maruppu ocitta pirāṉ; eṉ mātavaṉē. (II–7–2)

Translation

Nāraṇaṉ, the Supreme support of all the worlds,
Does ordain everything, Cause, effect and action; the Vedâs He pervades,
And is by the exalted Celestials and all else adored;
Mâtavaṉ, who the giant tusker slew, is my beneficent Lord.

Notes

(i) 'Nārâyaṇa', as a *compound, brings out the meaning that the Lord is the In-dweller of all things and creatures having name and form:

(ii) The †compound of the word reveals the Lord as sustaining the whole universe.

* 'Bahuvrīhi'.
† 'Tatpuruṣa'.

(iii) '*Nāra*' treats of the objects pervaded by the Lord; One aspect of '*ayana*' spotlights the Lord as the 'Means' and another aspect reveals Him as the 'End' as well.

(iv) Of the two meanings got at above, one emphasises the Lord's transcendence (paratva) and the other, His Saulabhya (Easy accessibility), vindicated principally through His Avatāras and the connected deeds.

mātavan enratē kontu, ennai ini ippāl pattatu
yātu avankalum cērkotēn enru ennul pukuntu iruntu,
tītu avam ketukkum amutam; centāmaraik kan-kunram;
kōtu avamil en kannal-katti; emmān; en kōvintanē. (II–7–3)

Translation

'Mātavan' is a name by me casually uttered,
And yet, Kōvintan my Lord, has inside me entered,
Ridding me of evils, one and all, the lotus-eyed Lord,
My nectar, Candy flawless, stands like a rock (firm and solid).

Notes

(i) 'Mādhava' is the Lord's name, most intimately associated with the Mother, Lakṣmī, meaning the 'Consort of Mā' and, for this reason, most endearing to Him. Śrī Parāśara Bhattar tells Goddess Raṅgarāyaki, enshrined in Śrīraṅgam, that the Lord is dear to the devotees because of Her association with Him (Śloka 51 of Śrī guṇaratnakośam)

In aphorism 111 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayam', the learned author high-lights the Lord's extra-liberal standards by which He gives us credit for what is known as '*ajñāta sukṛta*' (hidden or unknown merit), such as a casual mention of the word 'Mādhava' by some one, being treated by the Lord as a pious recital of His name; a mechanical naming of the sacred mountain in the South, known as 'Tirumāliruñcōlai malai, as devout remembrance of the sacred pilgrim centre and so on.

(ii) Having eradicated all the sins of the Āḻvār, root and branch, the Lord is jubilant, a fact reflected in His

effulgent Person. The Lord is free from the twin flaws of (1) expecting anything in return from His beneficiaries and (2) doing good to the devotees for their sake instead of for His own benefit. The candy which we know of, is exposed to two kinds of flaws, namely, use of faulty ingredients and faulty preparation. But the Lord is a flawless candy, which attracted the Āḻvār and kept him wholly absorbed in it.

(iii) '*Govinda, my Lord*'—The Āḻvār thinks that the Lord incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, (Govinda), only to enthrall him.

kōvintaṉ kuṭakkūttaṉ, kōvalaṉ eṉṟu eṉṟē kuṉittut
tēvum taṉṉaiyum pāṭi āṭat tirutti, eṉṉaik koṇṭu, eṉ
pāvam-taṉṉaiyum pāṟak kaittu, emar ēḻ eḻu piṟappum
mēvum taṉmaiyam ākkiṉāṉ· vallaṉ empirāṉ viṭṭuvē. (II–7–4)

Translation

Kōvintaṉ, the pot-dancer, cowherd, the Supreme Lord,
So do I His glory sing and dance, by Him enthralled
And blest, my sins were chased out and those
With me connected for generations, recipients of His grace,
He has made; how potent is Viṣṇu, my benefactor great

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār is lost in admiration of the immense prowess of Lord Viṣṇu, in redeeming him and placing him on a par with the Ever-free angels in Heaven (*Nitya Sūris*), a literal transformation of a base metal into gold. All his sins destroyed, he has been endowed with a mind steeped in the hilarious enjoyment of the Lord's glory. His amazing simplicity (*Saulabhya*) as Govinda and His transcendence (*Paratva*), side by side. And what more? All those connected with him, Seven generations, back and forth, have been blest likewise. They have been rendered worthy of His grace, looking upon Him as the Sole Refuge, true *to their essential nature*. Sage Vaśiṣṭa who accompanied Bharata to Chitrakūṭa to persuade Śrī Rāma to get back to Ayodhyā, told Śrī Rāma: 'ātmānaṁ nāti vartetā' This literally means 'Don't

exceed yourself'. Some interpret 'ātmānam' as Bharata, dear to Rāma like his own life. Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, however, interprets it as 'Don't exceed or give up your essential nature of doing the bidding of your devotees (āṣṛta pāratantṛya)'.

(ii) 'Govinda' has been repeated twice in Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma, yielding two different meanings, viz. (i) The recipient of praise and (2) The redeemer of the Earth (hidden by an Asura). The better known meaning is one possessing cows. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was coronated as 'Govinda' by Devendra, after the former's glorious protection and preservation of the pastoral life of the whole community *in tact*, by holding aloft Mount Govardhana for a whole week. This is indeed a unique wealth acquired by the Lord, come down to Earth, which cannot be had even in the Eternal Land, Śrī Vaikuṇṭha.

(iii) *Pot-dancing*: Even as the affluent Brahmins resort to the performance of 'Yāgas', the Shepherds, in affluence, indulge in sports like pot-dance-with pots piled one over the other, on the head and both the shoulders. The dancers will throw up pots alternately using both hands, without disturbing the equilibrium of the piled-up pots. Lord Kṛṣṇa, as a member of the cowherd community, naturally participated in all such sports and revelled, rather excelled'

viṭṭu ilaṅku ceñcōtit tāmarai pātam, kaikaḷ, kaṇkaḷ;
viṭṭu ilaṅku karuñ cuṭar-malaiyē tiru uṭampu;
viṭṭu ilaṅku matiyam cīr caṅku; cakkaram pariti;
viṭṭu ilaṅku muṭi ammāṉ matucūtaṉaṉ-taṉakkē. (II–7–5)

Translation

Sporting the majestic crown, exceedingly bright,
My lord, Matucūtaṉ's eyes, hands and feet are very smart,
Like the lotus, red and broad; His body like blue mount Shines,
His Conch is like the Moon bright and His discus, a veritable Sun.

Note

Tirumāḷai Āṇṭāṉ told Rāmānuja that this song reveals how the Āḷvār was attracted to the Lord through the display of His exquisite personal charms and ascribed this interpretation to his Master, Śrī Āḷavantār (Yāmuṉa) Śrī Rāmānuja was unusually quiet and when asked by the Instructor whether he had nothing to say against, as he very often did, Śrī Rāmānuja signified his approval through his broad, bewitching smile. But Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar would put it differently and say, "The song reveals the extra brilliance displayed by the Lord's person after making the Āḷvār and his associates His own". Whereas the former interpretation makes the Lord's personal charms the cause or instrument for weaning away the Āḷvār and bringing him into the Lord's fold, the latter shows it as the effect, the result of bringing the Āḷvār and his association unto the Lord's fold.

matucūtaṉai aṉṟi maṟṟu ilēṉ eṉṟu ettālum kārumam iṉṟi,
tuti cūḻnta pāṭalkaḷ pāṭi āṭa niṉṟu, ūḻi ūḻitoṟum
etir cūḻal pukku, eṉaittōr piṟappum eṉakkē aruḷkaḷ ceyya
viti cūḻntatāl: eṉakkēl ammāṉ tirivikkiramaṉaiyē. (II–7–6)

Translation

In none but Matucūtan do I take refuge,
On and on I sing, as an end in itself, hymns of His glory;
This is because of Tirivikkiramaṉ's grace extraordinary,
Who took births alongside, to set me right, down the ages.

Note

The Āḷvār has passed through a staggering cycle of births. The Lord also incarnated every time, in order to get hold of the Āḷvār, but only now He could get hold of him and bring him up to the required standard. A pertinent question is asked at this stage as to why the Omnipotent Lord should not have grabbed at the Āḷvār straightaway if He was so keen on getting at him, instead of following such a tedious and time-absorbing process. No doubt, the Lord could have adopted the short-cut, suggested above, in His unbridled independence, for there is none to question Him. But an

unreserved and unqualified amnesty would result in wholesale emancipation, *en masse*, which would cut across the very foundation of the Śāstras. The Lord is, therefore, on the look-out for some pretext or the other to reclaim the Subject through His extra-liberal standards. With this object, He also incarnated every time the Āḻvār was born but failed in His mission all along. Now, at long last, He has succeeded.

We can take it that this song reveals either the Lord's extreme grace or the Āḻvār's extreme humility.

tirivikkiramaṉ, centāmaraik kaṇ emmāṉ, eṉ ceṅkaṉi vāy
uruvil-polinta veḷḷaip paḷiṅku niṟattaṉaṉ eṉṟu eṉṟu uḷḷi,
paravip paṇintu pal ūḻi ūḻi niṉ pāta paṅkayamē
maruvit toḻum maṉamē tantāy: vallaikaṇ, eṉ vāmaṉaṉē.
(II–7–7)

Translation

Vāmaṉaṉ, my Lord, in just three strides you measured
The whole universe, as Tirivikkiramaṉ and in me ushered
A mind rivetted to your lotus feet, days on end adoring you,
My red lotus-eyed Master with sparkling teeth, how capable of you!

Notes

(1) *Āḻvār to the Lord*: How capable of you, how gracious! you have endowed me with a mind which adores You and sings your glory all the time as an end in itself.

(2) Śrī Nampiḷḷai has it that it was not a case of reconditioning the Āḻvār's mind so as to make it God-bent but one of fitting him with a new mind altogehter, one picked out from the Lord's strong room where valuables are stored up.

vāmaṉaṉ! eṉ marakata vaṇṇaṉ! tāmaraik kaṇṇiṉaṉ!
kāmaṉaip payantāy! eṉṟu eṉṟu uṉ kaḻal pāṭiyē paṇintu,
tū maṉattaṉaṉāyp piṟavit tuḻati niṅka, eṉṉait
tī maṉam keṭuttāy; uṉakku eṉ ceykēṉ? eṉ ciṟītaraṉē. (II–7–8)

Translation

Oh, Ciritaraṉ, My Lord, You redeemed my foul mind
And rid me of life's miseries, and now with a mind pure,
I worship Your feet, Sing and adore you as the Sire
Of Kâmaṉ, Vāmaṉaṉ, my lotus-eyed Lord, the emerald mount
And so on; (this great good of Yours) how can I recompense?

Notes

(i) The Lord is referred to as the Father of Kâmaṉ (Manmatha), because He begot through Rukmiṇī Devī, a Son by name Pradhyumna of exquisite beauty, said to be an 'Amśa' or incarnation of Manmatha, the minor-deity inducing amorous love.

(ii) What was the Āḻvār's mind like before it was redeemed? Śrī Nampiḷḷai says that it was hardly fit for reconditioning, as such, erratic like the one going in for ambrosia as well as poison, feeling attracted towards God as well as the petty pleasures of the sensual world. The Lord's grace has now operated in two ways, namely, bestowal of a mind solely rivetted to the Lord's lotus feet after throwing away the *erstwhile mind*, damned beyond redemption.

ciritaraṉ, ceyya tâmaraik kaṇṇaṉ eṉṟu eṉṟu, irâppakal vāy
verii, alamantu kaṇkaḷ nīr malki, vevvuyirttu uyirttu,
mariiya tīviṉai māḷa, iṉpam vaḷara, vaikal vaikal
irii, uṉṉai eṉṉuḷ vaittaṉai; eṉ iruṭikēcaṉē! (II–7–9)

Translation

My (Lord) Iruṭīkēcaṉ, how gracious of You indeed!
Lodged in me, every moment my joy you expand,
Having rid me of all my erstwhile sins dense;
Day and night, with hot tears in my rolling eyes,
I kept crying, Oh, Ciritaraṉ, Oh, lotus-eyed,

Note

Āḻvār to the Lord:

"I was crying out for you all the time, with tears welling up my eyes, breathing hot, but all my erstwhile miseries you

have now irrevocably cut out so that I go on enjoying you, and my joy grows by leaps and bounds every moment".

Well, this is the interpretation, current from the days of Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar who gave out this meaning. The earlier preceptors held that the Lord cut out the dense sins of the Āḻvār and made him cry out in ecstasy the Lord's names with tearful eyes, day and night, breathing hot, besides promoting this God-love of his every moment.

iruṭikēcaṉ, em pirāṉ ilaṅkai arakkar kulam
muruṭu tīrtta pirāṉ, emmāṉ, amarar pemmāṉ eṉṟu eṉṟu
teruṭiyākil, neñcē! vaṇaṅku; tiṇṇam aṟi; aṟintu,
maruṭiyēlum viṭēl kaṇṭāy! nampi-paṟpanāpaṉaiyē. (II–7–10)

Translation

My mind, if in you there's any clarity left,
Worship my Lord, Iruṭikēcaṉ, Chief of celestials aloft;
Know for certain and act, He is our Benefactor great,
Who rid Laṅkā of its tough rākśasa clan,
Shrink not from Him still, unto Paṟpanāpaṉ, the perfect, hold on.

Notes

(i) By addressing his mind in this manner the Āḻvār was only disclosing to the Lord his firm hold on Him.

(ii) Slaying the ten-headed Rāvaṇa is on a par with the redemption of the Āḻvār's mind which, aided by the five motororgans and five sense-organs, was holding fiendish sway over him, launched into the Sea of Samsāra. Śrī Nampiḷḷai likens the bestowal, on the Āḻvār, of a God-bent mind free from the devilish clutches of the senses in lieu of his erstwhile foul mind, to the destruction of Rāvaṇa and installation of Vibhīṣaṇa on the throne of Laṅkā.

(iii) The Āḻvār says unto his mind: "How can you, my mind, get out of the ken of Padmanābha, the perfect Lord with all auspicious attributes, and come to grief? The

Lord is perfect in every respect, You know, His attributes, His form exquisite and His benefaction unto us ".

paṟpanāpaṉ, uyarvu aṟa uyarum perum tiṟalōṉ;
eṟparaṉ eṉṉai ākkik koṇṭu, eṉakkē taṉṉait tanta
kaṟpakam; eṉ amutam; kār mukil pōlum vēṅkaṭa nal
veṟpaṉ; vicumpōr pirāṉ; entai tāmōtaraṉē. (II-7-11)

Translation

On Paṟpanāpaṉ's navel sprouted the lotus
Whence all worlds came, of matchless prowess,
And in me wholly absorbed, He is the '*Kaṟpaka*' tree,
That yielded me and then gave itself unto me;
Chief of Celestials, Vēṅkaṭam is His favourite abode, He's my nectar,
The cloud-hued Lord. Tāmōtaraṉ is my loving Master,

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār says that the Supreme Lord, with none above Him, is also the humblest; having made the Āḻvār His vassal, the Lord is wholly absorbed in him, making it appear that He knows no one else.

(ii) The '*Kaṟpaka*' tree is the legendary wish-yielding tree. Even as there is a vast gulf between the Lord's attributes and the comparable material in each case, the Lord, taken as the '*Kaṟpaka*' tree, differs from it in the following essential respects:

(*a*) the supplicant is also the Lord's creation;

(*b*) the Supplicant gets absorbed in the Lord;

(*c*) the supplicant gets not only all that he wants but gets the Lord Himself, who is thus the extra-ordinary tree, giving itself to the Seeker; and

(*d*) the Lord Himself becomes the object of enjoyment by His devotees.

tāmōtaraṉai, taṉi mutalvaṉai, ñālam uṇṭavaṉai
āmō taram aṟiya oruvarkku? eṉṟē toḻum avarkaḷ
tāmōtaraṉ uru ākiya civaṟkum ticaimukaṟkum
āmō taram aṟiya-emmāṉai eṉ āḻi vaṇṇaṉaiyē. (II-7-12)

Translation

Tāmōtaraṉ, my peerless, primordial Lord,
Of oceanic hue, who devoured all the worlds.
Even exalted Ticaimukaṉ (Brahmā) and Civaṉ cannot scan and comprehend,
Though on His person they stay and worship Him
And venture to think that they can His glory fathom.

Note

The Lord cannot be comprehended through one's own effort by any one, including the exalted Brahmā and Śiva, although they stay right on His body and are inclined to be presumptuous, venturing to attempt the impossible. But He is fully comprehended by the Āḻvār and devotees like him to whom the Lord has, on His own, vouchsafed all that knowledge, clear and concise, full and complete. The Lord who is the causeless cause, the Progenitor of the entire Universe, combines in Him the triple aspects unknown to many, namely, (1) He is the vassal of His devotees, (2) He is the originator of the Universe and (3) the friend-in-need, succouring one and all, in times of distress. Even the Āḻvār cannot fully comprehend the many favours done to him by the Lord, although one so great, had disclosed to the Āḻvār, so low, the vast array of His oceanic traits, like compressing an ocean inside the tiny mustard.

vaṇṇa mā maṇic cōtiyai, amarar talaimakaṉai,
kaṇṇaṉai, neṭumālait teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
paṇṇiya tamiḻ-mālai āyirattuḷ ivai paṉṉiraṇṭum
paṇṇil paṉṉiru nāmap pāṭṭu aṇṇal-tāḷ aṇaivikkumē. (II–7–13)

Translation

These tuneful songs on the Lord's twelve names, numbering a dozen,
Out of the thousand Tamil hymns yielded by Teṉkurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Setting out the love, intense and unlimited, of Kaṇṇaṉ,

Lustrous like the blue gem grand, Chief of *Amarars* (celestials)
(Unto His devotees), will unto the Sire's feet bind (the chanters).

Note

In this end-stanza, the Lord's love, intense and unlimited, for His devotees is emphasised. This provides the impetus for the Lord looking upon His devotees as His sole objects of enjoyment. Contact with this decad (Tiruvāymoḻi) is enough to render one, such a beloved devotee of Lord Kēcavaṉ.

Second Centum–Eighth decad (11-8)
(Aṇaivatu Aravu-aṇaimēl)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār was overwhelmed by the Lord's extraordinary benevolence which did not stop with him alone but overflowed its continents and extended to those connected with him, seven generations, back and forth. In other words, the heavenly bliss enjoyed by the '*Nityās*' in Heaven could be shared by him and his associates, right here. In his boundless compassion for the suffering humanity, caught up in the vortex of worldly life and sensual pleasures, the Āḻvār would naturally like to seize this golden opportunity and get the area of benevolence extended, by getting the '*Samsāris*' (worldlings) also associated with him as fellow-devotees. And so, he turns round and advises them to get into the Divine fold, seeing that the Lord is the one and only granter of Mokṣa, the final bliss, ridding them of the terrific involvement in worldly life, with its dreadful cycle of birth and death. It may be recalled that, once before, vide I-2, the Āḻvār addressed the fellow-beings with whom he wished to share all that exalted knowledge about the Divine order, imparted to him by a self-revealing God.

The earlier Ācāryas had held that, in this decad, the Āḻvār propagates the Lord's Supremacy. But Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar was inclined to think that the Lord's prowess of granting 'Mokṣa' is being talked about in this decad. As a matter of fact, the Lord's Supremacy has been dealt with in this very centum, in the Second decad, and there is no need to repeat it here so soon. Further, this decad is replete with expressions relating to the grant of Mokṣa.

In any case, it makes no difference either way, as God-head (*'Īśvara-tva*) and the prerogative of granting Mokṣa (*Mokṣa-pradatva*) go hand in hand, vested solely in the Supreme Lord.

Towards the end of this decad, as can be seen from stanza ten, the Āḷvār, however, feels frustrated by the unresponsive world around, jogging on in just the same way as before, all his advice having fallen on deaf ears, like the advice tendered by Mālyavāṉ and others to Rāvaṇa. The Āḷvār would, therefore, profitably revert to the enjoyment of the Lord as before, which got interrupted for a while because of his misplaced sympathy for those around, totally impervious to his wholesome advice. At the same time, it was no mean consolation for him that, in the process, he escaped getting contaminated by them and becoming one of them. Great indeed is his jubilation that he could still retain, *in fact*, the priceless wealth of God-love and God-enjoyment, like that of a person who clears a dacoit-infested area without being robbed and molested.

aṇaivatu aravu-aṇaimēl; pūmpāvai ākam
puṇarvatu; iruvar avar mutalum tāṉē;
iṇaivaṉ ām ep poruṭkum; viṭu mutal ām–
puṇaivaṉ piṟavikkaṭal nīntuvārkkē. (II–8–1)

Translation

The Supreme Lord who does on serpent-bed repose
And hold Pūmpāvai (Lakṣmī, the lotus-born) in embrace
Is Progenitor of them both (Brahmā and Śiva); He freely descends
Among all and sundry, Granter of Mokṣa, the raft (sure and certain)
He is, to swim across (Saṃsāra) the difficult and dreadful ocean.

Notes

(i) This stanza is an epitome of the contents of this decad.

(ii) The first two lines of the stanza bring out the setting in the Eternal land of absolute bliss (*Nitya Vibhūti*). So far as the "*Līla Vibhūti* (Sportive Universe) is concerned, the Lord is depicted as the originator of one and all, including those two calling for special attention, the

exalted Brahmā and Rudra and yet He incarnates among all and sundries, as if He is of their own species and mingles with them freely.

Being the granter of Mokṣa, He is the raft, safe and sound, to get hold of for those who are keen on crossing the ocean of 'Samsāra' with its terrific involvement in the cycle of birth and death and seek His help, finding that, by themselves, they can hardly cross this ocean, vast and deep.

nīntum tuyarp piṟavi uṭpaṭa maṟṟu ev evaiyum
nīntum; tuyar illā vīṭu mutal ām:
pūn taṉ puṉal-poykai yāṉai iṭar kaṭinta
pūn taṉ-tuḷāy eṉ taṉi nāyakaṉ puṇarppē. (II-8-2)

Translation

Contact with my unique Lord, wearing tulacī garland
Cool and nice, the Redeemer of the elephant,
In great distress, in the cool and lovely pond,
Will help to ford " Samsāra ', the dreadful ocean,
The breeder of all ills and attain the blissful heaven.

Notes

(i) In this stanza, the Āḷvār says that the Lord, as such, is not necessary for the attainment of Mokṣa and some kind of contact with Him will suffice. Such a contact will help one both ways, namely, obtaining relief from the otherwise incurable maladies of birth etc, and attaining the 'Eternal Land' of absolute bliss without the slightest tinge of sorrow

(ii) Swimming across the ocean of *Samsāra* is a never-ending process; if the ocean is interminably vast, the swimming also is interminably long, a perennial process. It is only the Lord's redemptive grace flowing through contact with Him, in some form, that will cut the gordian knot and take one out of this otherwise unfordable ocean.

puṇarkkum ayaṉ ām; aḷ'kkum araṉ ām;
puṇartta taṉ untiyoṭu ākattu maṉṉi:
puṇartta tiruākit taṉ mārvil tāṉ cēr
puṇarppaṉ perum puṇarppu eṅkum pulaṉē. (II-8-3)

Translation

The Lord is (also) ' Ayaṉ ' who from His navel emerged
And created the worlds, on His person duly lodged,
And ' Araṉ ', the destroyer too; on His winsome chest
There's Tiru; perceptible indeed are His herculean tasks many.

Note

The Supreme Lord not only discharges the functions of ' Ayaṉ ' (Brahmā), the Creator and ' Araṉ ' (Śiva), the destroyer, standing within them as their Internal Controller but also assigns specific portions of His body for their occupation. And then, there is ' Tiru ' (Lakṣmī), inseparably lodged on His winsome chest. And then, He reposes on the vast expanse of water, contemplating the ensuing creation of the universe. The herculean deeds performed by Him through Brahmā and Rudra and on His own, are most perceptible indeed.

pulaṉ aintu mēyum poṟi aintum niṅki,
nalam antam illatu ōr nāṭu pukuvīr!
alamantu vīya acuraraic ceṟṟāṉ
palam muntu ciril paṭimiṉ ōvātē. (II-8-4)

Translation

Those of you who the interplay want to quell,
Of the senses and sense-objects, so as to enter
The Eternal Land of perfect bliss, will do well
To enjoy the traits auspicious of the Lord, for ever;
How He tortured and slew the Asuras, think it over.

Notes

(i) Here is the Āḷvār's recipe for discarding the sensual pleasures, petty and transient, and entering the Eternal Land of perfect bliss:

" Be steeped in the enjoyment of His auspicious traits for ever ".

(ii) Unlike several other processes which are difficult and tiresome in the initial stages and are pleasurable only in the final stages of fruition, contemplation of the Lord's auspicious traits is an ecstatic experience, right from the beginning. It is also noteworthy that there are no inhibitions and injunctions restricting such enjoyment to certain days only or parts of the day as in the case of sea-bath etc.

(iii) This abode of ours is the harrowing land of eternal miseries whereas the Heaven is just the opposite—the Eternal Land of absolute bliss. The Āḻvār does not subscribe to the doctrine of philosophy which conceives of 'Mokṣa', as but the mere disembodiment of the soul on emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths. His concept of 'Mokṣa' is the eternal joy of constant service unto the Lord, in the yonder heaven, with no tinge of the erstwhile sorrows, partaking of the bliss of unlimited dimensions, fresh and exquisite, every moment, flowing from the Lord who is an inexhaustible fountain of bliss.

(iv) The Lord will destroy our sins and remove all impediments in the way of our union with Him, even as He tormented and destroyed the Asuras.

ōvāt tuyarp piṟavi uṭpaṭa maṟṟu ev evaiyum
mūvāt taṉi mutalāy mūvulakum kāvalōṉ,
mā āki, āmai āy, miṉ āki, māṉ:ṭam ām–
tēvāti tēva perumāṉ eṉ tīrttaṉē. (II–8–5)

Translation

The Supreme Lord, the causeless cause of the flowing universe, Its creation, sustentation and destruction, Chief of the Celestials, My Tīrttaṉ (Who sanctified me) did come down as a Horse, Tortoise, Fish and Man, and protected the worlds, one and all.

Note

The routine of the Universe falling under the three major compartments of creation, preservation and dissolution, goes on uninterruptedly because of the ever-alert and omni-

potent Lord who directs and controls them all. No doubt, He dowered on all of us, limbs and sense-organs to put us on a career of gainful activity with a view to attaining Him, but even if we stray away from Him He is such an indefatigable cultivator who doesn't lose heart when the yield is low or next to nothing, but goes on with His cultivation, hoping for better days. That is why He takes all the trouble to incarnate in various forms and goes on with His work of resuscitation.

tirttaṉ ulaku aḷantạ cēvaṭimēl pūntāmam
cērtti, avaiyē civaṉ muṭimēl tāṉ kaṇṭu,
pārttan teḷintoḻinta paintuḻāyāṉ perumai
pērttum oruvarāl pēcak kiṭantatē? (II–8–6)

Translation

Is there any need at all for others to deliberate
The glory of (Lord Kṛṣṇa) wearing tulacī garland, Tīrttaṉ (The Immaculate),
At whose lovely feet which spanned the Universe, Pārttaṉ placed a garland
And saw it (a little later) on Śiva's head, getting clarity of mind?

Note

In the battle against the "Kauravas', Arjuṉa needed the weapon known as 'Pāśupada astra' which could be had from Śiva after due propitiation. The compassionate Kṛṣṇa, however, told Arjuṉa the short-cut whereby he could offer at the former's feet the garland intended for Paśupati (Śiva). Arjuṉa did accordingly and that very night, Śiva appeared in Arjuṉa's dream, wearing that very same garland on the head and presented the weapon in question. Reference has been made, in this song, to the spanning of the whole Universe by the Lord as it was then that Brahmā washed the Lord's feet to the accompaniment of Vedic chantings, and the sacred water that flowed down the Lord's feet was held by Śiva on his head (Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti-9). Is there at all any need to dispute the self-evident glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa?

kiṭantu iruntu, niṉṟu, aḷantu, kēḻal āy, kīḻp pukku
iṭantiṭum; taṉṉuḷ karakkum; umiḻum;
taṭam perun tōḷ ārat taḻuvum; pār eṉṉum
maṭantaiyai māl ceykiṉṟa māl ār kāṇpārē? (II–8–7)

Translation

Lying, sitting and standing, measuring the worlds,
Getting into the waters deep and lifting up the Earth.
As the Boar gigantic, holding with Him all the worlds
And then spitting them out, embracing dame Earth
On His broad shoulders complacent, who can comprehend His love for Mother earth?

Notes

(i) Many indeed are the wondrous deeds of the Lord, done out of His great love for Mother Earth, the Sportive universe (*Līlā vibhūti*).

(ii) *Lying, sitting and standing*:

There are several ways of appreciating these postures of the Lord. These are set out below:

(*a*) *Reclining* on the Milk-ocean, the centre of creative activity, surrounded by the band of celestials;

Sitting on the serpent couch in the High Heaven; and *standing* firm on Mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam, His favourite resort.

(*b*) *Lying* prostrate in front of the Ocean, Śrī Rāma's supplication to the king of the ocean;

Sitting (Staying) in the Āśramas of the Maharṣis during His exile;

and *standing* victorious at the gates of Laṅkā after slaying Rāvaṇa (may also refer to Śrī Rāma standing victorious after slaying vāli).

(*c*) *Lying* in the pilgrim centre known as Puḷiṅkuṭi.
Sitting in the pilgrim centre known as Varakuṇamaṅkai.

and *Standing* in the pilgrim centre known as *Śrīvaikuṇṭam*.

(*a*) above refers to the Lord's transcendent glory:

(*b*) above refers to the Lord's 'Saulabhya' (easy accessibility) in His Incarnate form.

(*c*) refers to the Lord's iconic manifestation in these different postures in the respective pilgrim centres. See also notes under V-10-6.

kāṇpār ār em ican kaṇṇaṉai? eṉ kāṇumāṟu?
ūṇ pēcil, ellā ulakum ōr tuṟṟu āṟṟā:
cēṇ pāla vīṭō, uyirō, maṟṟu ep poruṭkum
ēṇ pālum cōrāṉ, parantu uḷaṉ ām eṅkumē. (II–8–8)

Translation

Who can comprehend Kaṇṇaṉ, my Lord
Or get at the know-how? hardly a morsel
Of His food can all the worlds be, His abode
Is high above the worlds, Inner Controller of all,
Indeed He pervades all over
With no exception whatever.

Notes

(i) It is indeed impossible for any one to gauge the full extent of the Lord's glory; even the exalted ones who are endowed with the capacity to delve into it, are not equal to the task. They too could touch only a fringe of it, just a peep, and no more.

(ii) All along, reference was made to the Lord containing within His stomach, eating up all the worlds, during the period of deluge, making it appear to be a herculean task of gigantic magnitude. Now, it will be seen that all the worlds put together hardly constitute a morsel of food for the Lord, a mere fleebite.

eṅkum uḷaṉ kaṇṇaṉ eṉṟa makaṉaik kāyntu,
iṅku illaiyāl eṉṟu iraṇiyaṉ tūṇ puṭaippa,
aṅku appoḷutē avaṉ vīyat tōṉṟiya eṉ
ciṅkap pirāṉ perumai ārāyum cīrmaittē? (II–8–9)

Translation

The son affirmed, ' Kaṇṇaṉ is everywhere ',
Shouted back irate Iraṇiyaṉ, " If he be not here? "
And slapped the pillar hard; there and then
The Lord appeared and killed the demon;
Indeed, my Naraciṅka's glory is beyond deliberation.

Notes

(i) In the preceding Song, the Lord's immanence was referred to. Perhaps, it didn't carry conviction with quite a few persons who doubted whether the Lord could pervade all over, in and out. This song is evidently addressed to those persons, warning them not to follow in the foot-steps of Hiraṇya and come to grief.

(ii) Hiraṇya slapped, with his own hand, a pillar built under his own supervision. There was, therefore, hardly any question of magic or sleight of hand which produced the furious Narasiṅga, right from the bosom of that very pillar, from the very spot on which Hiraṇya slapped that very moment. The points to be pondered over in this context are: Had the Lord not appeared from the crucial spot tapped by Hiraṇya or if His appearance had been delayed by even a split second, His immanence at all places and at all times would be open to question. His omnipresence having been established, His omnipotence needs to be demonstrated. If it is said that Narasiṅga was born, He was not born in the generally accepted sense of impregnation, birth, growth and all that. He jumped out of the ripped-open pillar, as a full- grown adult, a peculiar combination of Man and Lion, more than a match for the formidable Hiraṇya. Strange indeed were the boons conferred on Hiraṇya by Brahmā—the devil was not to meet with death at the hands of a male, female or a hermophrodite, neither by Gods nor by man or beast or any of the five elements, neither by day nor by night, neither in space nor on the ground, neither inside the house nor outside, so on and so forth. The Strange Visitor who sprang forth engaged Hiraṇya, in a *hand to hand fight*, dragged him

on to the *door-step*, laid him on His *lap* and tore open his bowels with the *finger nails* (spear-like claws), at *dusk*. Hiraṇya, the seemingly impregnable fortress, armed in a thousand and one ways against every conceivable source of danger, crashed, at long last, before the superior might of the Omnipotent Lord. The words in italics, as above, will show that none of the boons granted to Hiraṇya was violated.

cirmai koḷ viṭu cuvarkkam naraku īṟā,
irmai koḷ tēvar naṭuvā, maṟṟu ep poruṭkum
vēr mutal āy, vittu āy, parantu taṉi niṉṟa
kār mukilpōl vaṇṇaṉ, eṉ kaṇṇaṉai nāṉ kaṇṭēṉē. (II–8–10)

Translation

Seen have I kaṇṇaṉ, my cloud-hued Lord, of unique excellence,
All pervading, He is the triple cause of all existence,
Ushering in the exalted Heaven, Svarg and hell, the respective denizens,
The kind-hearted Devas and all else.

Notes

(i) As already mentioned in the preamble to this decad, the Āḻvār finds, at this stage, the people around, most unresponsive, all his advice having fallen on deaf ears. Frustrated though, he is still happy that he didn't get contaminated by them and become one of them, very much like clearing a dacoit-infested area without getting robbed or molested.

(ii) The Lord combines in Himself all the three causes of existence, the *material* (upādāna) *Instrumental* (Sahakāri) and the *operative* (nimitta) causes. For making pots, mud is the material cause, the potter's wheel and staff, the Instrumental cause, and the Potter is the operative cause. So far as the creation of this world is concerned, all the three causes vest in the Lord, yet another unique feature of the Lord. Apart from this universal aspect, the Lord regales the denizens of the high heaven with the exquisite charm of His transcendent Form, and

He has now chosen to present Himself unto the Āḻvār as the charming Kṛṣṇa. Great indeed is the Āḻvār's joy.

kaṇ-talaṅkaḷ ceyya karu mēṉi ammāṉai
vaṇṭu alampum cōlai vaḻuti vaḷa nāṭaṉ
paṇ-talaiyil coṉṉa tamiḻ āyirattu ip pattum valār
viṇ-talaiyil viṟṟiruntu āḷvar em mā viṭē. (II–8–11)

Translation

Those that learn these songs ten
Out of the thousand composed in choice tunes,
By (Caṭakōpaṉ), Chief of Vaḻutināṭu, abounding in fertile orchards,
Where go gay honey bees in their swarms,
Adoring the black-hued, large lotus-eyed Lord,
Will in high Heaven flourish and partake of bliss supreme.

Note

The chanters of this decad will shoot up from the harrowing depths of worldly existence to an exalted position in heaven, keeping at their beck and call, the denizens over there.

Second Centum—Ninth decad (II-9)
(Em mā viṭṭu)

Preamble

This decad pinpoints the concept of '*Puruṣārtha*' the ultimate value of the final goal of every individual. In the preceding decad, frequent references were made by the Āḻvār to the Eternal Land of absolute bliss. On hearing these, the Lord thought He would rather put the Āḻvār in Heaven if that was all His desire and accordingly told him, "Well, you can have the Mokṣa, as desired". It is now and here that the position gets crystallised. The Āḻvār revolves in his mind and concludes that any thing granted by the Lord, by way of catering to his desire instead of His own, is not worth having, and even heaven attained this way, would be little better than hell. The real '*Puruṣārtha*', or ultimate value

lies in whatever is bestowed by the Lord out of His own free grace and liking. And so, the Āḷvār speaks out his mind, as follows:

"My Lord, it makes absolutely no difference to me whether I am in heaven as the partaker of the endless bliss there or in the state of *Kaivalya*, lost in self-enjoyment or get consigned to the gloomy abyss, if it is all your sweet will and dispensation. On the other hand, I will not hesitate to decline even the gift of heaven, if it is bestowed on me just for my gratification. And so, may it please you to so ordain my goal as to make it coincide solely with your desire". Here is a clear enunciation of the paramountcy of the Lord's will, in total subjugation of the egoistic compulsions of the Individual. It is indeed very hard to find the Subject who can appreciate and fall in line with the Āḷvār's lofty train of thought, totally bereft of egoistic impulses and putting his whole weight on the Lord. It was for this very reason that Empār, the great preceptor, is said to have screened his audience and closed the gates of the lecture hall before discoursing on this decad.

em mā vīṭṭut tiṟamum ceppam; niṉ
cem mā pāta-paṟput talai cērttu; ollai
kaimmā tuṉpam kaṭinta pirāṉē!
ammā! aṭiyēṉ vēṇṭuvatu ītē. (II–9–1)

Translation

You relieved the distress of an elephant, benevolent Lord!
If you'd only soon set your grand lotus feet red
On my head, the topic of high heaven I shall not moot,
Sire, this is all I pray for, nothing more do I want.

Note

Right in the beginning of this song, the Āḷvār makes his position abundantly clear. He shall no longer mention about the high heaven, be it a matter of assuming a form like unto that of God (Sārūpya), staying in the same area as the seat of the Lord's kingdom in heaven (sālokya) etc. All that he needs is that the Lord should set His lovely pair of red lotus feet on his head.

itē yāṉ uṉṉaik koḷvatu eññāṉṟum; eṉ
mai tōy cōti maṇivaṇṇa! entāy!
eytā niṉ kaḻal yāṉ eyta ñāṉak
kai tā; kālak kaḻivu ceyyēlē. (II–9–2)

Translation

My lovely Lord, lustrous like the dark blue gem,
All that I pray unto you now and at all times,
Is that you do lend me the hand of wisdom,
To reach your feet, difficult to attain, with no loss of time.

Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Āḷvār had categorically stated that he wanted nothing more than the Lord's lovely pair of lotus feet being set firmly on his head. And yet, the Lord tempts the Āḷvār and asks him whether he would want anything more. The Āḷvār, however, stands his ground, all right and reaffirms that he wants nothing else.

Lord : Well, how long will you persevere in this attitude?"

Āḷvār : "As long as you and I exist".

Lord : "What made you so steadfast ?"

Āḷvār : "Your exquisite charm".

Lord : "And what should I do now ?"

Āḷvār : "Pray, deign to make this vassal, your sole dependent, get at your lovely pair of feet, difficult to attain".

(ii) About the lending of the hand of wisdom, here is an anecdote, very instructive.

Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ and Empār were colleagues and co-disciples of Śrī Rāmānuja. During a fairly long spell of absence of the former from Śrīraṅgam, a disciple of his stayed with Empār. One of those days, quite a few disciples of Empār were administered by him the five-fold sacraments enjoined for Śrī vaiṣṇavas. The aforesaid disciple of Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ also got the sacraments from Empār along with the others. To an enquiry by Empār,

whether the disciple in question had spiritual relationship with any other Preceptor, the answer was assuring enough and indicated that there was no other spiritual mentor. But then, when Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ returned to Śrīraṅgam, this particular disciple went back to him, and served him as before. When Empār got to know of this, he hurried to Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ and expressed regret for the administration of the Sacraments to the disciple in question during Āṇṭāṉ's absence from the station. But Āṇṭāṉ's magnanimity put Empār at ease, in no time. The former observed: "If two persons stretch out their hands to one fallen into a well, it is so much the easier both for the riser and the raisers". The helping hand, in this case, refers to the spiritual knowledge imparted by both the preceptors.

ceyyēl tīviṉai eṉṟu aruḷ ceyyum eṉ
kai ār cakkarak kaṇṇa-pirāṉē!
ai ār kaṇṭam aṭaikkilum, niṉ kalal
eyyātu ētta aruḷcey eṉakkē. (II–9–3)

Translation

Kaṇṇā, my benefactor, wielding the discus bright,
'Tis your grace that I from evil deeds desist;
Bless me that I shall adore, without respite,
Your comely feet even when phlegm chokes my throat tight.

Note

Āḻvār to the Lord: "I pray not for relief from sufferings but for a mind rivetted to your feet at all times, even in those dark moments when the throat gets choked by phlegm".

C.f. the 12th Jitante śloka (recited at the conclusion of the worship of the household Deity)

Which means:

"Whatever calamities might befall me, let not my mind be apart from you; this would be enough to salve me".

eṉakkē āṭcey ek kālattum eṉṟu, eṉ
maṉakkē vantu iṭaivītu iṉṟi maṉṉi,
taṉakkē āka eṉaik koḷḷum ītē:
eṉakkē kaṇṇaṉai yāṉ koḷ ciṟappē. (II–9–4)

Translation

The greatest good I desire from Kaṇṇaṉ, my Lord,
True to my essential nature, is that command He shall,
That I serve Him wholly and at all times, and own He shall
Me as His exclusive vassal, in my mind firmly lodged.

Notes

(i) This song is the quintessence of this decad, determining, as it does, the greatest good for the individual soul, in keeping with its essential nature, namely, abject dependence on the Lord as His exclusive vassal for all time. For abiding in such a state without the slightest aberration at any time, the Āḻvār seeks the Lord's Grace.

(ii) Śrī Nampiḷḷai appreciates this decad as the most outstanding, of all the hundred decads (Tiruvāymoḻis) and even so, this song is the best, in this decad, That is because the Āḻvār prays unto the Lord that He should stay inside him, firm and for ever, and take from him service, service exclusively unto Him and at all times, rendered solely for His pleasure, eschewing the slightest tinge of personal egoism, absolutely selfless like the Moon, Southerly breeze, sandal paste and water.

(iii) In the learned assembly presided over by Empār, Piḷḷai Tirunarayūr Arayar enquired why the Āḻvār, endowed with full and complete knowledge, clear and concise, should at all make a request of this kind to the Lord, instead of resigning himself wholly to His grace, leaving Him to do whatever He liked. While agreeing with the Arayar that it was a pertinent question, Empār elucidated that it was the innate charm of the destined goal, namely, selfless service unto the Lord for His exclusive enjoyment that drew the Āḻvār out in this manner and made him long for it, even as the Divine Mother,

inseparably poised on the Lord's winsome chest, keeps on saying, "I shall not get parted from my Lord even for a trice".

ciṟappil vītu cuvarkkam narakam
iṟappil eytuka, eytaṟka; yāṉum
piṟappu il pal piṟavip perumāṉai,
maṟappu oṉṟu iṉṟi, eṉṟum makiḻvaṉē. (II-9-5)

Translation

Let me or let me not go, after death,
To the renowned heaven, the svarg or the hell,
But may I meditate upon the Lord, Who, though free from birth,
Chooses to take many a birth, in an unbroken spell,
Forgetting Him at no time and thus be full of mirth.

Note

The Āḻvār's sole concern is to remain steeped for ever in the enjoyment of the Lord's wondrous deeds and auspicious traits, displayed during the numerous incarnations taken at His sweet volition.

makiḻ koḷ teyvam, ulōkam, alōkam,
makiḻ koḷ cōti malarnta ammāṉē!
makiḻ koḷ cintai col ceykai koṇṭu eṉṟum
makiḻvuṟṟu uṉṉai vaṇaṅka vārāyē. (II-9-6)

Translation

Oh, Lord, from You blossomed the mirthful Moon and the Sun resplendent,
The blissful Celestials, mankind with Knowledge radiant,
The fauna and flora with no such radiance, pray appear before me
That I may worship you ever, by word, deed and thought gaily.

Note

Āḻvār to the Lord: My Lord, you made the celestials, full of bliss, the mankind, radiant with knowledge, the luminous

Sun and Moon as well as the non-sentient beings, devoid of knowledge. You, who could create this Kaleidoscopic Universe, can surely make me enjoy you wholly, by word, deed and thought and, for this purpose, you should be before me, at all times.

vārāy! un tirup pāta malarkkīḻp
pērātē yāṉ vantu aṭaiyumpaṭi:
tārātāy! uṉṉai yeṉṉuḷ vaippil eṉṟum
ārātāy! eṉakku eṉṟum ekkālē. (II–9–7)

Translation

Oh, Lord, You haven't granted me the favour
Of attaining your lotus feet for ever;
However long I wrap You in my mind, non-satiate you are,
Pray appear before me, for my eyes to feast for ever.

Note

The Āḻvār feels that, having whetted his God-thirst and God-hunger, it was but meet that the Lord should appear before him for his eyes to continually drink deep of His nectarean beauty.

ekkālattu entaiyāy eṉṉuḷ maṉṉil, maṟṟu
ek kālattilum yātoṉṟum vēṇṭēṉ;
mikkār vēta vimalar viḻuṅkum eṉ
akkārak kaṉiyē! uṉṉai yāṉē. (II–9–8)

Translation

You, Vedic scholars of rank and repute do (with love) devour,
Oh, my candy- fruit, my eternal Master,
If you shall my mind enter and stay there, firm and secure,
Never shall I from you seek any other favour, (be sure).

Notes

(i) Rock-candy is a delicious product of cane-juice and it is the Āḻvār's figment of imagination that conceives of the Lord being as delicious as the fruit of the imaginary Rock-candy tree. (akkārakkaṉi is the term used in the

original text of this song, to denote this imaginary fruit of an imaginary tree).

(ii) The versification, as above, conforms to the interpretation of this song (original) by 'Emperumāṉār (Rāmānuja). Śrī Āḷavantār (Yāmuṉa) would, however, appear to have interpreted this song, as follows:

"My Lord, if you would only enter my heart, as my Sovereign Master, even if it be for a split second, I shall not seek from you any favour, at any other time, not even this very favour now sought".

yāṉē eṉṉai aṟiyakilātē,
yāṉē eṉ-taṉatē eṉṟu iruntēṉ;
yāṉē nī; eṉ uṭaimaiyum nīyē;
vāṉē ēttum em vāṉavar ēṟē! (II–9–9)

Translation

Oh, my Lord, by the entire heaven adored!
Chief of Celestials, Fancied I, in ignorance bred,
I my master was and all things mine own;
But now do I realise, all are yours, I and mine.

Note

The Lord had done His best, down the ages, to reclaim the Āḻvār but the latter was striking a divergent path all the time, not knowing his essential nature and relationship with God. Prior to his reclamation, the Āḻvār was like unto a Prince, fallen into the hands of a hunter and brought up like the hunter's son in strange environments, totally alien to his native surroundings. But now true knowledge has dawned on him and he is in a position to advise the people around to disengage themselves from the erroneous notions of 'I' and 'Mine' and be rooted in the Lord, whose exclusive vassals they are, solely dependent on Him.

ēṟēl ēḻum veṉṟu, ēr koḷ ilaṅkaiyai
nīṟē ceyta neṭuñ cuṭarc cōti!
tēṟēl eṉṉai; uṉ poṉ-aṭi cērttu ollai;
vēṟē pōka eññāṉṟum viṭalē. (II–9–10)

Translation

My resplendent Lord; you tamed the seven bulls unruly
And routed Laṅkā, the city beautiful; trust me not,
Better take me quick to your golden feet
And never allow me to slip back to things worldly.

Note

Lord : Āḷvār, I suppose you are quite safe now and have nothing more to fear."

Āḷvār : "Sire, you can't be too certain about me, still in this material body, and in these frightful surroundings. Situated as I am, the possibility of my going astray and slipping back to old ways cannot be ruled out. I cannot, therefore, feel safe unless and until I am laid at your feet firmly. To get at me, you can of course root out the impediments even as you tamed the unruly bulls and destroyed Laṅkā, to get at Nappiṉṉai and Sīta respectively.

viṭal il cakkarattu aṉṉalai mēval
viṭal il vaṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
keṭal il āyirattuḷ ivai pattum
keṭal il viṭu ceyyum kiḷarvārkkē. (II–9–11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the thousand immortal songs
Of Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ, ever close to the Lord,
Who the discus inseparable holds, will unto those that sing
Them ardently, bestow heavenly bliss, from all ills freed.

Notes

(i) These ten stanzas will confer on those who recite them heavenly bliss. It need not be questioned how these songs could, by themselves, grant Mokṣa, which is the sole prerogative of the Supreme Lord. What is intended to be conveyed by this end-song is that the recital of these ten songs will gladden the Lord and, as a consequence thereof, His gift of Mokṣa will follow. C.f. IV-5-11 where the lotus-born Lakṣmī is said to confer

Mokṣa on those who recite the ten tanzas in that decad. Actually, the Lord is the sole Granter of Mokṣa but He grants it only through the instrumentality of Śrī Lakṣmi. as the Grand Intercessor between Man and God and her recommendatory role plays a very vital part in the ascent of Man to the foot-stool of God.

(ii) In the last song, the Āḷvār had requested the Lord not to let him slip back to his old ways. The Lord assured the Āḷvār that he need have no misgivings whatsoever and added that it was not for giving up devotees like him that He was carrying in His hand the discus all the time. By implication, He could hold on to His devotee as firmly as He held the discus.

Second centum–Tenth decad (II-10) (Kiḷar oḷi iḷamai)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḷvār stressed the need for quick action on the part of the Lord, while praying that He should take service from him, at all times. The Āḷvār's agitation for expeditious result was, however, construed by the Lord as the Āḷvār's desire to serve in this body itself and He, therefore, directed the Āḷvār to serve Him in His Iconic Form in Tirumāliruñcōlai malai (very near to Maturai in the South), a nice, quiet place, abounding in lovely hills and beautiful orchards. The Āḷvār accordingly enjoys alike the pilgrim centre and the Lord enshrined there, his predilections extending even to the other hills, in and around, and the very route leading thereto.

kiḷar oḷi iḷamai keṭuvataṉ muṉṉam,
vaḷar oḷi māyōṉ maruviya kōyil.
vaḷar iḷam poḷil cūḷ māliruñcōlai
taḷarvu ilar ākic cārvatu catirē. (II–10–1)

Translation

Ere the youth, up and radiant, gets blasted
'Tis but meet that one reaches with a mind steadfast,

Māliruñcōlai, the hill resort, full of orchards,
Young and lovely, where stays always the wondrous Lord
Of (growing splendour and) mounting radiance.

Notes

(i) Even reaching the holy place, 'Tirumāliruñcōlai Malai', is an end in itself, says the Āḻvār. Even as one is advised to acquire knowledge when still young so as to reap the benefit thereof, in later years, one is advised to go to this pilgrim centre while still young and before the sensual pleasures get hold of the rising youth and distract it.

(ii) There is nothing like growth or diminution, waxing or waning for the Lord Who is immutable and yet, His Splendour is said to grow by virtue of the exhilarating impact of this lovely station on the Lord. This is sheer poetic grandeur extolling the beauty of the place.

(iii) This is one of the four principal Vaiṣṇava Pilgrim centres, the other three being Śrīraṅgam, Tirumalai and Kāñcīpuram.

catir iḻa maṭavār tāḷcciyai matiyātu,
atir kural caṅkattu aḻakar-tam kōyil,
mati tavaḷ kuṭumi māliruñcōlaip
patiyatu ētti ēḻuvatu payaṉē. (II–10–2)

Translation

Better ignore the viles and charms of damsels young
And on Māliruñcōlai, meditate for your good;
The Moon walks on its tops and the conch keeps blowing
In the temple of Aḻakar, our Lord.

payaṉ alla ceytu payaṉ illai, neñcē!
puyal maḻai vaṇṇar purintu uṟai kōyil,
mayal miku poḻil cūḻ māliruñcōlai
ayalmalai aṭaivatu atu karumamē. (II–10–3)

Translation

My mind, better desist from deeds futile
And reach the mount beside Māliruñ Cōlai, lovely and fertile,
Surrounded by many an enchanting orchard,
The favourite resort of the cloud-hued Lord.

Notes

(i) In the last two stanzas, the Āḻvār expatiated on the glory of the Pilgrim centre, Known as 'Māliruñ cōlai', treating one's visit to that place or mere meditation of the station as an end in itself. And now, the Āḻvār extends the same treatment even to another mount in its vicinity, by virtue of its associaton with 'Māliruñ-cōlai Malai'.

(ii) The futile deeds, referred to, are rites and rituals performed for attaining swarga etc, or even contemplation of the Lord's transcendent glory and the by-gone Avatāras. The emphasis thus rests on this pilgrim centre which is now getting broad-based so as to include the neighbouring mountain, as well.

karuma vaṉ pācam kaḻittu uḻaṉṟu uyyavē,
perumalai eṭuttāṉ piṭu uṟai kōyil,
vaṟu maḻai tavaḻum māliruñcōlait
tirumalaiatuvē, aṭaivatu tiṟamē. (II–10–4)

Translation

Going over to Māliruñ cōlai is real good,
Where the rain-clouds crawl and dwells the Lord
For ever, for us to serve Him and get undone
Our '*Kārmik*' bonds tough; His person does the glory beam
Of His great deliverance of Mount (Govardhan)

Note

To extricate ourselves from the otherwise inextricable bondage of 'Karma' and to serve the Lord, the Āḻvār deems it but proper that we should reach this sacred hill where the Lord stays for ever, with great delight. That He is the great deliverer is writ large on the person of Lord Aḻakar enshrined

there, proclaiming His great glory as the deliverer of the inhabitants of the pastoral village of Gokula from the fury of Indra, by holding aloft Mount Govardhana for a whole week during His Avatāra as Kṛṣṇa.

tiṟam-uṭai valattāl tīviṉai perukkātu,
aṟam muyal āḻip paṭaiyavaṉ kōyil,
maṟu il,vaṉ cuṉai cūḻ māliruñcōlaip
puṟamalai, cārap pōvatu kiṟiyē. (II–10–5)

Translation

Do not your energy dissipate and your sins multiply,
Better go to the mount close to Māliruñ Cōlai,
Surrounded by cascades, neat and lovely,
Where stays the Lord, bent on protection
Of His devotees, holding the discus, that benevolent weapon.

Note

The Āḻvār brings on a par with 'Māliruñ Cōlai malai' another mount around. He advises that all one's energy, that might otherwise be dissipated on selfish pursuits breeding endless sins, could as well be used up in going on a pilgrimage to the said mount.

kiṟi eṉa niṉaimiṉ! kīḻmai ceyyātē,
uṟi amar veṇṇey uṇṭavaṉ kōyil,
maṟiyoṭu piṇai cēr māliruñcōlai–
neṟi paṭa atuvē, niṉaivatu nalamē. (II–10–6)

Translation

Desist from base deeds and remember
'Tis good to think solely of traversing the road
Which leads to Māliruñ Cōlai where live together
Herds of deer and young ones and stays our Lord,
Who from hanging hoops ate up all the butter.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār advises people to divert the mind from sensual pleasures and *fix it on the route leading to 'Māliruñ*

Cōlai ' where Lord Kṛṣṇa stays on, to grant ' darśan ' to us, the post-incarnation beneficiaries.

(ii) Even as the deer and the young ones stay together, it behoves us to stay on with the Lord, our eternal Father and Mother, rolled into one.

nalam eṉa niṉaimiṉ! naraku aḻuntātē,
nilam muṉam iṭantāṉ nīṭu uṟai kōyil,
malam aṟu mati cēr māliruñcōlai,
valam muṟai eyti maruvutal valamē. (II–10–7)

Translation

It would be best if you got yourself attached,
With due reverence, to Māliruñ Cōlai where shines
The Moon clear and dwells the Lord Who once
Redeemed the Earth (as the Boar unique); better teach
Your mind this advice good, let it not dredge in hell.

Notes

(i) Going to hell does not mean that those who somehow fail to visit this pilgrim centre will go to hell. To be in conjunction with the Lord, as Sītā put it to Śrī Rāma before setting out for exile, is Swarga while being away from Him is hell. The emphasis here is, therefore, on not getting parted from the Lord.

(ii) The Moon's blemishes having been removed by his rubbing against the hill-top of this station, he is shining quite clear.

(iii) " *With due reverence*" : duly realising the inter-relationship between Man and God.

valañceytu, vaikal valam kaḻiyātē,
valañceyyum āya–māyavaṉ kōyil,
valañceyyum vāṉōr māliruñcōlai,
valañceytu nāḷum maruvutal vaḻakkē. (II–10–8)

Translation

Acquire strength all right but waste it never,
Better go round daily Māliruñ Cōlai where stands enshrined

The wondrous shepherd (Kṛṣṇa), our great Benefactor
And the Celestials come down and move around.

Notes

(i) The Lord gives Himself unto His devotees, besides the strength to enjoy the rapport with Him. Lord Aḷakar Himself goes round Mount Māliruñcōlai, in the company of His Consorts, even as Śrī Rāma and Sītā went round, hand in hand, the mountain slopes of Citrakūṭa.

Even as the citizens of Ayodhyā followed Śrī Rāma when he went into exile, the Celestials do come to this pilgrim centre and circumambulate the temple of Aḷakar. It would indeed be a grievous misuse of the specially endowed human body, highly conducive to holding communion with the Lord and serving Him in a number of ways, if it strayed into the domain of sensual pleasures, thus moving in the opposite direction.

(ii) Naññcīyar is said to have related from personal experience how he observed Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar and Piḷḷai Tirunarayūr Arayar, leisurely pacing about the premises of the temples, gazing at the tall turrets and the lovely mansions around, in short, imbibing every small detail, literally drinking them in, with their eyes. This was in dire contrast to the men of the world to whom visiting temples is a mere formality, moving about like race-horses, as if it is a place more to hurry from. For the great Savants to whom the Lord is at once the Means and the End, temples are places to stay and serve. No doubt, genuflections and circumambulations do not serve as the 'Means' for them and yet, they get absorbed in the sanctity of the temples and their surroundings, as an end in itself.

vaḷakku eṉa niṉaimiṉ, valviṉai mūḷkātu;
aḷakkoṭi aṭṭāṉ amar peruṅkōyil,
maḷak kaḷiṟṟu iṉam cēr māliruñcōlai,
toḷak karutuvatē tuṇivatu cūtē. (II–10–9)

Translation

Get not immersed in dire sins,
Take this advice just and wholesome,
' Tis best that you firmly resolve to worship
Māliruñ Cōlai where elephants young herd up
And there is the huge temple of the Lord,
Who, the devil of a woman destroyed.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār says, it would suffice even if one just resolved to worship this pilgrim centre.

(ii) The devil of a woman referred to here is Pūtanā.

(iii) Speaking about the herds of young elephants mustering here in strength, Nampiḷḷai observes that it is no wonder that the Lord (Aḻakar) standing like an elephant, Young and majestic, (Cōlai Maḻakkaḷiṟu) as Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār appreciates the Deity, attracts thousands of elephants.

cūtu eṉṟu kaḷavum cūtum ceyyātē,
vētam muṉ virittāṉ virumpiya kōyil,
mātu uṟu mayil cēr māliruñcōlaip
pōtu aviḻ malaiyē, pukuvatu poruḷē. (II-10-10)

Translation

Giving up gambling and thieving as means of subsistence,
Get into Mount Māliruñcōlai, your final goal
Where flowers are in full bloom and lovely peacocks, in pairs, revel
And there is the temple where the Lord lovingly stays,
Who did elaborate the contents of the Scriptures, long back.

Notes

(i) ' Thieving ' refers to ' *Ātma apahāra* ', the stealing of the Soul, looking upon ourselves as our own Masters ignoring the fundamental fact that we belong to the Lord.

(ii) *Gambling*: indulging in quibblings to put people on the wrong track and dissuade them from believing in the existence of God, good and bad, and things of that sort.

(iii) Long, long ago, the Lord disseminated the Vedas, unseen, and later on, as Lord Kṛṣṇa, He expounded their inner meanings, right from the chariot on the battlefield; Bhagavad Gitā is but a restatement of the central teachings of the Upaniṣhads.

(iv) The Lord loves to stay in this pilgrim centre, just to attract, by His exquisite charm, those not amenable to His advice (upadeśa).

(v) *Final Goal*: Going to Māliruñcōlai is an end in itself.

poruḷ eṉṟu iv ulakam paṭaittavaṉ pukaḻmēl
maruḷ il vaṇ kurukūr vaṇ caṭakōpaṉ
teruḷ koḷḷac coṉṉa ōr āyirattuḷ ip pattu
aruḷuṭaiyavaṉ–tāḷ aṇaivikkum muṭittē. (II–10–11)

Translation

These ten songs out of the thousand imparted
By mighty Caṭakōpaṉ of famous Kurukūr, with clarity great,
Shedding on us knowledge, clear and concise, about the Lord
Of many an auspicious trait, Who the worlds did hopefully create,
Will cut out *Samsāra* and put us at His merciful feet.

Notes

(i) As already explained in II-9-11, what is meant here again is that the Lord will be immensely pleased with those who learn these ten songs and confer on them the benefits referred to here.

(ii) The Lord endowed us with limbs and sense-organs so as to capacitate us into a career of gainful activity. This is what is meant by creation and He goes on with it, undaunted by adverse results, always hoping for better luck, an indefatigable Cultivator, with robust optimism.

THE CENTUM, IN RETROSPECT
(DECAD-WISE SUMMARY)

(II-1): The traumatic experience of the Saint, longing for the external (physical) perception of the Lord and stung by the poignancy of separation from that priceless blue-gem, the darling of the celestials, described by him in I-10-11, is set out in vivid colours *in the first decad;* thrown into a state of deep dejection, the Āḷvār stands transformed once again as a forlorn female lover;

(II-2): The erstwhile gloom of the God-lover, sunk deep in dejection, is found to have vanished, *in toto*, *in the second decad*, consequent upon his exhilarating union with the Lord, the pendulum having swung to the other end; in such an exultant mood, the Saint highlights the Lord's supremacy vis-a-vis Brahmā and Rudra, the possible contenders for this position of eminence, in the light of the wondrous deeds performed by the Lord during His incarnations ;

(II-3): *In the third decad*, the Saint gives vent to the joy of his reunion with the enchanting Lord, an inexhaustible fountain of bliss;

(II-4): *In the fourth decad*, we see the Āḷvār, thrown into deep dejection back again, inasmuch as his longing for entry into the gatherings of the devotees and singing profusely the glory of the Lord in their steadfast company, did not materialise; assuming once again the overtones of a frustrated lover. The Nāyakī's grief is too deep for words and the gnostic mother comes on the scene and seeks clarification from the Lord as to what He proposes to do with the poor little victim, her daughter;

(II-5): Beholding, once again, the joyous Lord in all His splendour and paraphernalia, the Saint feels immensely delighted and narrates his ecstatic experience, *in the fifth decad;* the Lord meets the aspiration of the Āḷvār by conferring on him the heavenly bliss longed for by him, right here;

(II-6): *In the sixth decad*, the Āḷvār hastens to assure the Lord that he shall not part from Him any more, finding Him at the height of His joy of union with him but nevertheless apprehensive of the possibility of his slipping away, overwhelmed by His transcendent glory;

(II-7): *In the seventh decad*, the Āḷvār expatiates on the extraordinary benevolence of the Lord, in extending His grace to all those associated with him, seven generations back and forth;

(II-8): *In the eighth decad*, the Āḷvār, swayed by boundless compassion for the suffering humanity, turns round and advises them to get into the Divine fold, taking due note of the fact that the Lord is the one and only granter of Mokṣa, the final bliss, ridding them of their terrific involvement in the dreadful cycle of birth and death; (This is the second time the Āḷvār addresses the world, the first was in I-2.)

(II-9): *In the ninth decad* the Āḻvār pinpoints the concept of ' Puruṣārta ', the ultimate value or final goal of every individual, the emphasis resting on the Lord's voluntary dispensation, out of His free will and spontaneous grace, individual gratification of one's own desire receding to the background altogether; what a lofty train of thought, totally bereft of egoistic impulses and putting the entire weight on the Lord!

(II-10): *In the concluding decad of this Centum*, the Āḻvār exhorts people to propitiate the hilarious Mount Tirumāliruñcōlai (near Mathurai, in Tamil Nāḍu) his predilections extending even to the other hills, in and around and the very route leading thereto; the Āḻvār advises people to go to this pilgrim centre, while still young and before the sensual pleasures get hold of the rising youth and distract it.

ERRATA (Vol. I)

PAGE	LINE	
1	1	*For* decades *read as* decads.
1	7	*For* Divnie *read as* Divine.
2	7	Insert the following after ' say ' " that God is the fountain-source of infinite bliss ".
8	8	(From bottom *For* him *read as* Him.
15		Foot-note insert ? at the end.
18	4	(From bottom) *For* being *read as* Being.
23	15	(From bottom) *For* Those *read as* To, those
,,	11	(From bottom) insert ' by ' after ' sought '.
26	10	Delete, before ' calls '.
31	8	*For* wearing *read as* weaning.
32	12	Delete ' the ' at the beginning.
50	11	Substitute, for ! and ! for, at the end.
76	6	(From bottom) Shift the, before ' fit '.
80	13	Insert) before ' peerless ' and delete) at the end.
81	11	(From bottom) insert , before ' of '.
87	10	(From bottom) insert , before ' to '.
89	9	(From bottom) insert , after ' operates '.
91	4	Insert , after ' mind '.
101	2	*For* Discuss *read as* Discus.
105	12	*For* demons *read as* demon's.
110	19	(Forms part of line 18) *For* He *read as* he.
114	Last	*For* It *read as* I.
136	3	(From bottom) *For* apired *read as* aspired.
158	20	Substitute! for full-stop at the end.
160	5	Insert full-stop after (Yâmuna).
161	14	*For* vallaikaṇ *read as* vallaikâṇ.
163	8	Insert , after ' his '.
168	5	Insert , after ' of '.
172	8	*For* with *read as* within.
176	10	(From bottom) *For* of *read as* or.
183	17	*For* Fancied *read as* fancied.
191	15	Delete) before ' as '.
..	16	Substitute) for, after ' Deity '.